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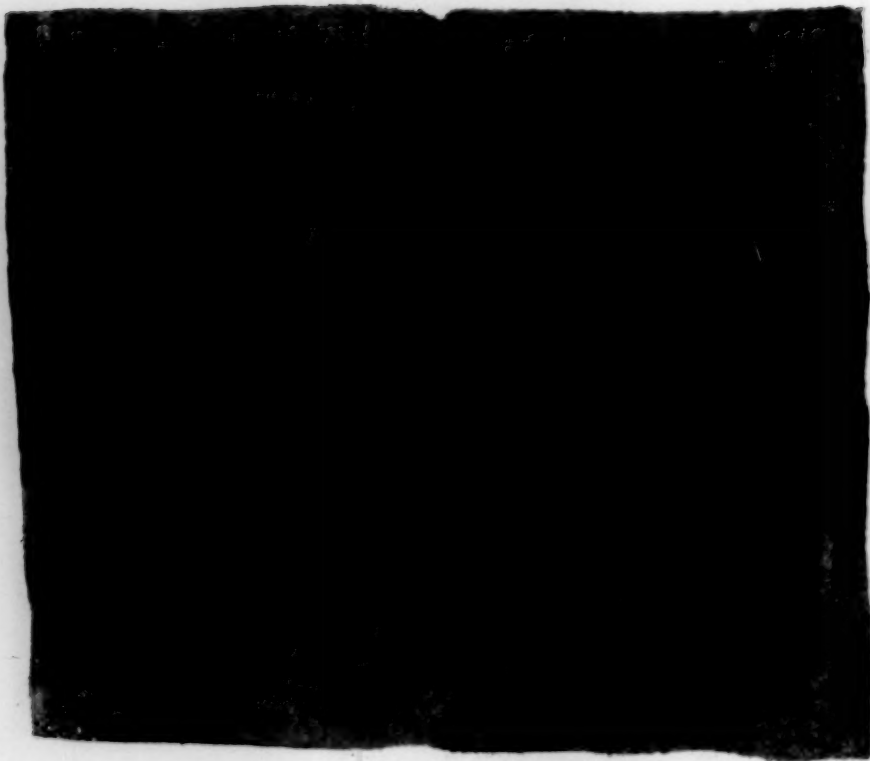


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THE  
*Solemn Injunction.*  
A NOVEL.



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THE  
SOLEMN  
INJUNCTION.

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A NOVEL.

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IN FOUR VOLUMES.

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BY  
AGNES MUSGRAVE,

*AUTHOR OF CICELY OF RABY, &c.*

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“ In a solitary chamber, and midnight hour,  
“ How many strange events may arise.”

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VOL. III.

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M.DCC.XCVIII.



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THE

*Solemn Injunction.*

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CHAPTER I.

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THUS stood affairs between the families of the Duke of Wakefield and Sir Robert Bertram; and so far had Lord Morville endeavoured to conceal his love and his chagrin when he returned from a ball, given at the Baronet's house, where it was publicly spoke of by the two families and their relative connections, that Miss Bertram was so shortly to be the Marchioness of Felton, that this was probably the last time she would be seen as Miss Bertram beneath her father's roof.

VOL. III.

B

Mortified

Mortified, at his own pride, which had made him, till too late, reject all means for recovering a heart he had reason to suppose was once his, Lord Morville quitted, very early, the house of Sir Robert Bertram, muttering curses on his own folly, and at the power he found Miss Bertram had over him. Never till this night could he suffer himself to suppose that she would give her hand to the Marquis of Felton, and still had endeavoured to believe he held the station he once did in Miss Bertram's heart ; but now she was lost for ever to him ; and each grace and beauty she possessed, was heightened by the despair he felt. He could not bear, he was assured, to see her with calmness as the Marchioness of Felton ; and the tortures he endured, made him resolve instantly to set out for Yorkshire. Such was the hasty determination made by his Lordship, upon quitting Cavendish Square.—Alighting from his chariot at his own house, he instantly gave orders for his travelling equipage to be got ready ; but, in a

3

few

few minutes, contradicted the order. No, it would add to the triumph of the fickle Mary; he would stay and compliment her upon her nuptials. This resolution lasted not many hours; for the servants had been only a short time in bed ere his Lordship rang his bell and repeated his former orders.

The sun had not long been risen when Lord Morville was in his chaise, and rattling along the North road, with as much speed as if happiness would be found at Malton Park, where every surrounding object would remind him of Miss Bertram.

When his Lordship reached Grantham, he was unresolved whether he should rest there for the night, or proceed without sleeping to Malton: he had, however, ordered supper, and was carelessly looking over a London newspaper, when his attention was arrested by the following paragraph:—



“Post-horses are at present much harassed in the vicinity of the metropolis, owing to the rejected lovers of the fascinating daughter of a certain northern Baronet quitting town, to avoid witnessing her approaching union with the accomplished heir of a noble Duke.”

Lord Morville threw down the paper, rung the bell, and ordered his carriage; into which he went, leaving supper untasted behind him, and ordered the postillions to take the London road, to the utter astonishment of the people at the inn and his own servants, who hesitated not in supposing his Lordship was certainly crazy.

“No,” thought he; “I will not be ranked amongst the rejected lovers of Mary Bertram; she shall see the disappointment she perhaps imagines I have sustained fits very easily upon me.”

His



His Lordship tried various positions during the night in order to sleep; but those positions were either very uneasy ones, or the idea of the future Marchioness had banished Morpheus.

When Lord Morville reached the Earl of Knaresborough's house in Piccadilly, whither he had ordered himself to be drove, it was near the hour of dinner: his appearance greatly alarmed Lady Augusta; for he was undressed, looked fatigued and agitated.

"What means," said she, "this disorder in your dress? your looks inform me, Morville, you have not been in bed all night."

"Perhaps not, Augusta; perhaps I shall not sleep to-night."

"Your manner joins with your appearance, to assure me you are either very unhappy, or that you have entered so deeply into habits of dissipation, as to seriously alarm me for you; your spirits are agitated,

your mind ill at ease—what has caused this disorder?”

“Augusta, make no conjectures—I have nothing to agitate me; do you not know what an insensible being I am?—why talk then to me of my mind and my spirits! I feel no want but of my dinner.”

“You know the party that are to dine with the Earl; you ~~sure~~ do not mean to meet them with your hair in this disorder, and in this dress?”

“Why not, Augusta? I shall not drive up to Harley-street to dress.”

Again her Ladyship represented the absurdity of his appearance.

“Talk not to me, Augusta,” said he, with a vehemence and asperity she had never before heard him at any time display—  
“Talk not to me, I cannot, will not bear it.”

No

No further, therefore, was Lord Morville questioned by his sister; but after a moment's recollection, he submitted to allow the Earl's valet to assist him in making some little alteration in his dress.

Sir Robert and Henry Bertram, with the Marquis of Felton, were, with several other people of distinction, in the dinner party at the Earl of Knaflborough's; the Duke of Wakefield had been expected; but particular circumstances prevented the fulfilling his engagement. Lord Morville contrived to place himself at table opposite his rival, and close by his friend Mr. Bertram.

Scarce able to command himself, Lord Morville, during dinner, drank repeated bumpers of Madeira; his spirits, which at first appeared sunk, now rose; he laughed, he talked—and Henry Bertram, who saw that he, very soon after dinner, was completely off his guard, in vain tried to restrain

the exuberance of his spirits. He had learned by accident the late journey and sudden return of his Lordship,—who had, even from the brother of Miss Bertram, concealed his feelings, nor ever once enquired of him concerning the probable state of her heart; yet, as Mr. Bertram marked his demeanour at table, he at once developed the cause; and fearing some evil consequences might arise from the turbulent state he saw the passions of Lord Morville were in, he called him into an adjoining apartment, to expostulate with him on his conduct; but his Lordship would not listen, and again seated himself as before at the table.

The Marquis of Felton saw the evident perturbation Lord Morville sustained, and guarded his expressions, quitting very early the party. No sooner did his Lordship observe the Marquis had left the room, than eluding the watchful eye of Mr. Bertram, he followed;

lowed; but the Marquis had drove from the door.

Ripe for all feats of mischief, Lord Morville sallied forth, and found himself in the morning stripped of a considerable sum at a noted gaming-house. At seven o'clock he alighted from a hackney coach in Harley-street, and went to bed, vexed and humiliated. Towards the evening he arose, and with very unpleasant reflections: his own folly stared him in the face, and he painfully remembered his reprehensible conduct the preceding day at his father's table. The natural candour and generosity of his temper again took the lead: he was sensible of the forbearance of the Marquis, which he well knew sprung not from cowardice; and resolved, without leaving time for further reflection, to write to him, and candidly account for his strange conduct. In this letter his Lordship spoke of Miss Bertram's having, during the winter, rejected his addresses; of his not having been sensible



how excessively she was beloved by him, till he learned she had consented to give her hand to another. He next mentioned the distraction of mind which had urged him to quit London, and as hastily return; that he owned he had done all in his power to draw the vengeance of the Marquis upon him; that he had thirsted after his blood, or rather wished his own life to be a sacrifice to his folly; that he acknowledged the moderation of the Marquis had prevented the sad consequences at which he had aimed; that his generosity had filled him with respect for his character; that he was infinitely more deserving of Miss Bertram than ever he had been, and that he would never attempt to break by any means an union so desirable.

No sooner had his Lordship finished his epistle, than he went to Cavendish-Square. Inquiring for Mr. Bertram, he learnt he was not within, and left a card, wishing to see him in Harley-street the next day. The wish

wish was complied with at an early hour by Henry, to whom his Lordship apologized for the petulant and overbearing manner he had assumed when they last met; from this he made a digression to the cause relating to what my readers already know, and which Mr. Bertram had guessed at, regarding the former and present state of his feelings.

“Why, Morville,” said Henry, when the recital was finished, “why not sooner disclose this? why not speak to me of the situation of your heart? trust me I should have then been your friend with Mary; now it is too late for any party to recede with honour; for the settlements are all ready for signing, and even the day is fixed for the marriage.”

“I know it is now too late, Henry; it is to you, not to Miss Bertram, I have made this confession; I wish not at this period to awaken any remembrance of me in her heart. After the nuptials take place, I will see and pay my congratulations to her; and

then quit England, till I learn to forget her whose image now wholly occupies my mind."

Mr. Bertram saw the spirits of Lord Morville so much agitated, that he spent the remainder of the day in endeavouring to calm them. ↵

Alicia had, before Henry quitted Cavendish Square, received a card from the Marquis of Felton, requesting an hour's private conversation with her, and begged she would be so obliging as to name an early time. Alicia fixed two o'clock that day, when she contrived to be left at home alone.

Punctual to the hour, the Marquis made his appearance, apologising for the liberty he had taken, by saying he had sought the interview, in hopes of learning from her the state of Miss Bertram's heart; adding, it will doubtless appear strange that, when the  
day



day of our union approaches so near as the seventh of June, I should deem this a necessary inquiry."

When Miss Bertram," replied Alicia, "agreed to give her hand to the Marquis of Felton, "she had doubtless in her heart felt for him a decided preference, and, in her union with him, hoped for happiness. I am indeed concerned that from me the Marquis seeks to learn what Miss Bertram's fully declared by her acceptance."

"This is rather, Miss Sleigh, an evasive answer; but let me solemnly conjure you, as you value the happiness of your friend, to answer me frankly, when I assure you, no other end is meant or sought by me, than what tends to prevent misery resulting from an unhappy union. At Malieveren, was not Lord Morville a favoured lover?"

"I will be candid, my Lord—he was favoured by Miss Bertram, ere he declared himself a lover; but the manner in which that declaration was made, banished the  
regard

regard she had felt; and since she has looked upon Lord Morville more as a brother than a lover."

"I thank you, Miss Sleigh, for your candour, but yet hold my opinion: I am strangely deceived if Miss Bertram attends to the impulses of her heart, if still she would not prefer Lord Morville. I blame her not; she was herself deceived when she listened to my suit; but she may, when married to me, recollect how dear his Lordship was once to her heart; some circumstance may inform her of his penitence, and I shall then be looked upon as the bar to their mutual happiness. Lord Morville is now sensible of his folly—so may Miss Bertram soon. But read this," said the Marquis," as he gave into the hands of Alicia Lord Morville's letter.

"I see it," said she, returning the letter, "in the same light you do, my Lord:—but say, what is it you require of me in this case?"

"In early youth, my dear Miss Sleigh, I received an impression too deep for  
time,

time, absence, or even the supposed death of the object, to erase ;—vainly have proposals for marriage been made me, enforced with entreaties from the Duke, my father—all were refused. I saw, admired, and, I may say, loved Miss Bertram; but not with that kind of passion which had once filled my heart. In marrying Miss Bertram, I hoped to secure equally her happiness and my own; and by so doing, gratify the earnest wish of the Duke. When all was fixed for my marriage, I learned some circumstances, that I will, if needful, hereafter disclose; and, at nearly the same time, discovered Lord Morville's love for Miss Bertram. I am therefore now most desirous to forward the match between them;—but how, in honour, can I recede from positive engagements which I am resolved to fulfil, if Miss Bertram really does honour me by a decided preference. To you, then, I apply for intelligence; to your prudence shall I trust."

Some

Some other conversation passed before the Marquis took his leave. Alicia was wonder-struck at the intelligence the Marquis had given; for, a stranger to the motives which had actuated Miss Bertram in regard to Lord Morville, she had supposed he was indifferent to her; nor did she think his Lordship was attached to her friend;—but now, various, well-recollected circumstances rose to her mind, and assured her, the conjecture the Marquis had made was a just one; and that yet, Lord Morville retained his place in Miss Bertram heart. To Henry she divulged what the Marquis had said, but which, from motives of delicacy, he had not spoke of to Mr. Bertram; who, the following day, visited the Marquis, who then more fully disclosed his reasons than he had to Alicia.

Heartily did Henry join in the plot against Mary, and contrived that evening to draw Lord Morville into a *tête-à-tête* with her at the opera, which was what he had made strong resolutions against, yet wanted

wanted firmness to avoid. The Marquis saw, or imagined he saw, the struggle Miss Bertram still felt between love and her own offended dignity.

The next day, under pretence of some alteration making at the house, which was to receive them upon their marriage, the Marquis quitted town for a week. Lord Morville, now inspirited by what, during the week, Mr. Bertram communicated to him, paid a close attendance upon Miss Bertram, who seemed all at once to lose her vivacity ; and his Lordship appeared to be deeply agitated by alternate hope and fear. At the Marquis's return, he held a long conference with Miss Bertram ; after which, Lord Morville no longer was her public attendant.

The Marquis returned the last week in May ; his Majesty's birth-day was on the following Monday, and on the Thursday it was



was expected the Marquis was to be united to Miss Bertram. On the Saturday he drove her to Richmond, to call upon his aunt the Duke's sister, the Dowager Countess of Ashforth; but Miss Bertram not having returned at nine o'clock, the family were alarmed at the Baronet's, and a messenger dispatched to St James's-Square, to inquire if the Marquis had sent any message there concerning the long stay he had made. No account being gained at the Duke of Wakefield's, or at the Marquis's house in Berkley Square, conjecture served but to heighten fears, which were allayed by a few lines, brought by the Marquis's footman, from Miss Bertram, begging excuses for the method she had taken to secure her happiness; but that, upon her return from Scotland, she would give such reasons as she hoped would at least meliorate her fault. From the servant they learned that the Marquis had drove beyond Barnet in the phaeton; but that his valet waited  
with

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with a hired carriage, into which the Marquis and Miss Bertram removed.

1  
The Duke received a similar card from his son: his Grace scarce could command himself before Sir Robert; scarce could he refrain from throwing out reproaches against the giddy conduct of Miss Bertram, who had doubtless, he supposed, been the instigator of so foolish a journey.

“Had,” said the Duke, “their wishes been opposed, some excuse might be alledged; but, as matters stood, it cannot be by any means accounted for.”

The Earl of Knaresborough thought his son had a very fortunate escape;—“For,” said he, to Lady Augusta, “this foolish elopement proves her more giddy and unthinking than I had imagined she was.”

At

At length the day fixed for the return of the Marquis and his bride arrived ; and as it was expected they would first go to the Duke's, Sir Robert and Lady Bertram were invited to be present at their reception.

The Duke had been at some pains to frame the speech with which he meant to receive the fugitives ; and it consisted of dignity, reproof, and forgiveness.

It was almost dusk when the Marquis and Marchioness were announced. " I have brought," said the Marquis, " as he led his bride up the large drawing-room, " your Grace a daughter, beautiful, amiable, and accomplished."

" I am sensible of all this," said the Duke, interrupting his son ; but the absurdity of you and Miss Bertram going upon such an expedition, and the indignity two people of rank have thus subjected themselves



selves to, by marrying like beggars behind a bush, needs many excuses."

"Had I married Miss Bertram, this step had not been necessary."

"Not married Miss Bertram!" exclaimed the Baronet.

"Not married Miss Bertram!" re-echoed his Grace.

"Equally deserving of your protection is she, who is Marchioness of Felton, and who now with me thus kneeling implores your forgiveness."

"Rise, Francis—rise, Madam," said the Duke; this affair, ere I can grant what you ask, requires explanation."

"Where then is my daughter?" inquired the Baronet.

"Under your own roof, Sir Robert, with Lord Morville, the husband of her choice; to them I shall refer you for an explanation of our conduct."

Candles were brought; and the bride the Marquis had chosen in preference to Miss Bertram,

Bertram, almost even in the eyes of that lady's parents, might justify him. Tall and finely formed, her face and figure was that of the most finished beauty; yet this uncommonly handsome woman was alike unknown to the parents of the Marquis; the Baronet and his lady, who, after congratulating his Lordship, took their leave.

CHAP.

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CHAPTER II.

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WHEN Sir Robert returned home, Mr. Bertram led his sister on one side, Lord Morville on the other, and presented her to the Baronet and Lady Bertram as Lady Morville.

“Excuse me,” said she, falling at their feet—“O forgive your giddy child, who had nearly, by giving her hand without attending to the impulse of her heart, sacrificed her happiness for ever: she thought she would have found it, divided from Lord Morville, but felt she was mistaken, at a period when no step but the one she took, could preserve her.”

Lady

Lady Morville was raised by her father :  
“ Your pardon is secured with me,” said  
the good baronet ; “ to yourselves I leave  
it to determine, whether the union you  
have made will prove a blessing or punish-  
ment : the latter, I fear, if you do not  
both resolve to act with less levity than  
you have done.”

The Earl of Knaresborough, who had been  
already acquainted with the marriage of his  
son, now entered ; of him also forgiveness  
was entreated, and he followed the example  
of his friend, by giving much the same lec-  
ture and pardon ; except that he blamed  
his son entirely, in having trifled both with  
his own happiness and that of Miss Bertram.

The explanation was now called for, con-  
cerning the lady the Marquis had preferred,  
and why they all had chosen to take so long  
a journey ; but as the conversation which  
contained this explanation may not so fully  
inform

inform my readers as I think needful, I shall do it in my own way.

The Marquis of Felton had, as he informed Alicia, early in life fallen in love with the beautiful daughter of a minister of the church of Scotland, when upon a visit to his grandmother, the Dowager Dutchess of Wakefield, who, originally of that country, had chose, upon her widowhood, again to retire there. This lovely girl, her grace had taken, when only eight years old, out of a charitable intention: Mr. Ross, her father, was moreover a distant relation to the family, from whom the Dutchess drew her own descent.

The attachment of the Marquis was quickly perceived, and the discovery communicated by the Dutchess to her son; Marian Ross was sent to a distant part of the country, and threatened with deprivation of every comfort, should she ever converse with her lover; whilst to Mr. Ross she was re-



presented as artful and wicked. Fearful of irritating his patrons, and especially the Dutchess, to whom he owed many obligations, he was satisfied to entrust his daughter to her charge.

The Marquis, who could not be brought to make any promise, found out the retreat of Miss Ross, who, although she assured him whilst the Dowager Dutchess lived, she would never again consent to see him, yet was drawn into a correspondence, which continued till the death of her patroness, when she was by the Duke inveigled abroad, and confined in a convent; from whence she had made her escape, and found means to inform the Marquis (who had supposed her dead, after having first been married) that she then was with her father in Edinburgh. But this account did not reach him till all was settled for his marriage with Miss Bertram; for it was the very morning of  
the

the day he arrived at the Earl of Knaflborough's.

The Marquis did not see how, in honour, he could recede from his engagements with Miss Bertram; but he had heard at Malieveren, that Lord Morville was a favoured lover; and that his lordship still entertained sentiments in his heart for Miss Bertram, which caused his strange behaviour to him. The letter he received from Lord Morville fully confirmed the supposition, and relying upon the honour and prudence of Alicia, he made her the visit I have before related. The Marquis candidly disclosed his situation to Mr. Bertram, and at the same time assured him, that was it found Miss Bertram's heart decided in his favour, after Lord Morville had an opportunity given him of renewing his suit, he was still ready to fulfil the engagements he had entered into; but that, if the idea he had formed was just, it would be the height of madness to sacrifice

the happiness of so many people, to gratify the mistaken notions of the Duke, who confined all merit within prescribed bounds ; but as yet he was not satisfied whether, if he was at liberty to offer himself, Miss Ross would accept his hand on such conditions as he could tender it, when most probably she would encounter reproach, and perhaps persecution from the Duke.

It was agreed, before the Marquis and Mr. Bertram parted, that Lord Morville should have so much information on this subject as might encourage him to speak again of his love to Miss Bertram, during which time the Marquis, under pretence of visiting the house, which was to receive him after his marriage, flew upon the wings of love to Edinburgh.

Miss Ross, deeming herself no longer bound by the promise she had made the  
Dowager



Dowager Dutcheſs, which the perſecution ſhe had ſuſtained from the Duke had cancelled, now heſitated not, as ſhe had done before, but conſented, if it would contribute to his happineſs, to become the wife of the Marquis of Felton. When he returned to London, he was informed that Lord Morville, had again apparently aſſumed the empire in Miſs Bertram's heart, who felt reſtrained by her promiſe given to the Marquis, from which ſhe was releaſed by him on their firſt interview, after his viſit to Miſs Roſs.

Lady Auguſta had no intimation of this affair from any party concerned, and the whole of their future plan was concerted between the Marquis and Lord Morville, to which Miſs Bertram conſented; but it was not divulged either to Henry or Alicia, the Marquis obſerving to them, that now a perfect knowledge of each others wiſhes had been made known, no friend ſhould be in-

C 3

volved

volved on their account ; “ but,” he said to Mr. Bertram, “ do not be surprisèd if you lose sight of us for a few days.”

The duke had declared, he would rather see his son the last of the illustrious house of Wakefield, than it should be continuèd to the latest posterity, by the marriage of the Marquis of Felton with Marian Ross, and he positively smore never to give his consent to such an union. If the Marquis married Miss Ross, it was evident his father would not sanction it, and he feared if the Duke heard she was again at liberty, she would by some means be taken from him ; he therefore resolvèd no delay should be made.

Miss Bertram’s retraction of a promise so lately made, and avowal of her partiality for Lord Morvelle, would doubtless bring rebuke on her, and his lordship, when he found she declared her preference in his favour, was little inclined to trust his happiness to the probability of again being heedlessly

lessly cast away; he was not of a temper to brook delay, therefore quitted London two days before the Marquis and Miss Bertram, and joined them about fifty miles on the north road, and proceeded to Edinburgh, where the lovely Miss Ross became Marchioness of Felton, and at the same time Miss Bertram gave her hand to Lord Morville.

The Duke's displeasure was announced in terms which threatened irreconcilable aversion to his son's choice; and a command was given in the Marquis's hearing, that he should from that time no more be admitted into any house belonging to the Duke.

“Remember,” said he to his son, “from this hour I shall consider you as an alien,—and shall do all in my power to deprive you of fortune: the title must descend to you, and the entailed estate; but you will find it very insufficient to support the lustre of the house from which you sprung.”

The Marquis knew that at present to vindicate himself, would be only to enrage his father more ; the persecution the Marchioness had suffered from the Duke he rather wished to be forgotten, than that it should be urged as a motive to influence him to do justice to her merit ; for the amiable son of this haughty peer was convinced that such a suggestion as—that he was wrong—or, that Miss Ross had sustained injustice, which he was bound to atone for, would never be forgiven.

The Dutchess gave an encouraging look to her daughter-in-law, who had readily acquiesced with her Lord in his plan of presenting her at Wakefield-house, before the Duke had it in his power to know who she was. The Marquis had indeed flattered himself, her very distinguished beauty, and his father's desire of seeing him married, might have prevailed over his dislike, which now appeared unconquerable.

The

The next day the Dutcheſs wrote both to the Marquis and Marchioneſs, congratulating them on their marriage, and affuring them of her endeavours being uſed to reſtore them to the favour of the Duke, adviſing them to live for the preſent retired, nor attempt to ſee or write to the Duke, with whom ſhe was the following day going down to Radſtone-houſe, where the papers of the late Dutcheſs remained, amongſt which ſhe had lately ſeen ſomething relative to the family of the Marchioneſs, which, if proved, would, ſhe hoped, be one means of reconciling the Duke, but, ſhe added, that ſhe would write from Radſtone again.

This letter was communicated to the family of Knaſborough, and that of Sir Robert Bertram, who called upon the Marquis and Marchioneſs the day after their return from Scotland. All were ſtruck by the fine figure and handſome features of the Marchioneſs, whoſe manners were at once intereſting and unaffected. The natural grace



and elegance of this beautiful woman suited the dignity of the station to which her marriage had exalted her. Strong indeed, all concluded, must be the prejudices of the Duke, when beholding her, he could so harshly refuse his forgiveness. The Marchioness promised to correspond by letter with Lady Morville, and the Marquis made the same promise to Mr. Bertram.

The following day the Marquis and Marchioness left town for his seat in Dorsetshire, and Sir Robert Bertram's family, with Lord and Lady Morville, the Earl of Knaresborough and Mr. Meynell, as guests to the Baronet set out for Yorkshire; Lady Augusta, who was to be a visitant at Malton, accompanied them.

In the parish church of Malieveren Lord and Lady Morville were united, with the consent of all their friends, according to the form of the church of England. On this occasion all ranks of people were invited to  
partake

partake of the rejoicings, which lasted at Malton and Malieveren, for the space of one entire week. The most splendid entertainment given was at the castle, on the last day of those rejoicings, when Lady Bertram gave a *bal de champetre*. Alicia's fine taste, her lively imagination shone conspicuously on this occasion: to her judgment her ladyship committed the arrangement of the whole. The grounds around the castle were enlightened by the fanciful arranged illuminations, and for the light and elegant decoration of the pavillions, in which the music and refreshments were placed, and for the enchanting effect they produced, her ladyship was indebted to the elegant and simple genius of Alicia.

The varied entertainments given on this long wished-for union of the families of Morville and Bertram, were scarcely at an end, when they were agreeab'y surprised by a visit from the Marquis and Marchioness



of Felton, who had come some miles out of their road to pay it. They were going down into Scotland, in consequence of a letter they had received from the Dutchess; who informed them she had found the papers alluded to when she had written before, and that they informed her Mr. Ross was descended from a baronet of the same name, and that, could he command money, to contend with the present possessor of the estate, there appeared little doubt, but his right was a superior one, and that he would be successful; the title was dormant, and the possessor of the estate had never claimed it; a proof he thought his right to both had: her grace had also sent those papers to her son, which had belonged to Mr. Ross's aunt, the widow of his father's brother, who had been supported by the kindness of the late Dutchess of Wakefield, and died under her roof at the period of her grace's remaining in Scotland: thither the Dutchess now urged her son to go, and search if this could  
be

be properly authenticated, and if so, begged every step might be taken for Mr. Ross to assert his claim, drawing upon her banker for any sum that might be wanted; as, should Mr. Ross succeed, she made no dispute of the Duke's receiving the Marchioness as his daughter. Lady Felton had never, however, heard the circumstances mentioned by her grace. After spending two days at Malieveren, the Marquis and Marchioness took leave of their friends to prosecute their journey into Scotland.,

Although Alicia could not cease to reproach herself for disobeying her mother's injunctions; yet she hitherto had found no opportunity to visit Oakdale, as she was commanded to do so, secretly and alone; but the family were shortly to go to Bertram castle, and then she imagined she might form some sufficient excuse for quitting it for a few days alone, at least with Henry's assistance; she resolved to speak to him on the subject; but

but he in general wore so dejected an air, when alone with her, that she was afraid to mention any thing on a subject which had agitated him so violently, when last they had had conversed regarding herself, and the mystery that surrounded her.

Sir Robert and Lady Bertram were alarmed by the visible alteration in the appearance of their son; he was grown pale,—his strength and flesh were alike wasted, and his spirits, which naturally were uncommonly equal and chearful, appeared no longer so. When he did assume a lively manner, it seemed forced, and far from a heart which appeared sunk in dejection.

With much reluctance Mr. Bertram submitted to see the physician Lady Bertram had sent for, to prescribe for him; this gentleman assured her ladyship, that Mr. Bertram's disorder appeared to him no way likely to be relieved by medicine: its seat  
was,

was, he apprehended, in the mind, and that he thought change of scene might do much towards restoring him : exercise of mind and body is also necessary, continued the doctor, “ but he assured me he was in perfect health and spirits ; nor do I see, at present, any cause for alarm.

CHAP.

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### CHAPTER III.

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HENRY the next day was alone with his father for a considerable time ; and the following one, when Lady Bertram and Alicia were seated together in her ladyship's dressing room, she began to speak of Henry.—“ Doctor Dealtry,” said she, “ persists in it, he has received some disappointment : that he has fixed his affections where they have not been returned. Have not you, Alicia, been oft made Henry's confidante ? has he not spoke to you on this subject ?”

“ No, I assure your ladyship,” said the blushing und faltering Alicia ; “ no, Mr. Bertram never spoke to me even of his love for the charming Lady Augusta, from whom I imagine the disappointment must originate.”

“ No,



“ No, Alicia—not with Lady Augusta does the disappointment originate ; but from an equally amiable, equally lovely young woman. Yoo know her heart, her sentiments—tell me then, Alicia, has she refused Henry Bertram ? is she insensible to the misery he now endures ? can she behold, unmoved, the affliction of his parents ? ”

“ Indeed, my beloved Lady Bertram, you err ; I see you suspect that the destitute orphan, the object of your bounty, has ensnared the heart of your son ; but on my knees hear me solemnly protest, Mr. Bertram never told me he loved me, otherwise than as a brother ; and I call heaven to witness, (if my heart deceives me not,) tho’ I love Mr. Bertram most sincerely, I love him with an affection that I would a brother, had it pleased heaven to have bestowed one on me.”

Lady Bertram raised and embraced Alicia, who wept from agitation.

“ To



“ To see you, my sweet Alicia, united to my son, would be the greatest happiness I could enjoy. I am satisfied my suspicions were false ; for so strangely has he conducted himself regarding you, that of late I imagined he had been rejected by you, which he had generously concealed ;—but compose yourself, and I will now inform you of what I know regarding the attachment of Henry ; you may perhaps assist to develope the seeming mystery.”

It had long been the intention of the Earl of Knaresborough and Sir Robert, to cement their friendship by the union of their children ; a secret which was carefully guarded, lest if known, it might with the young people, retard the accomplishment of what was ardently desired by their parents. When you, Alicia, was in danger, from the fever brought on by the bruises and fright you sustained from the overturning the phaeton, Henry was no longer able to conceal the passion he felt for you, and it was evident to Sir Robert, who remained at the castle, that

that on your life depended that of his son ; upon your recovery, Henry again sought to conceal his feelings.

„ Sir Robert declared his fears to the Earl, that in respect to Mr. Bertram, their hopes of an union with Lady Augusta would be frustrated, for that his affections were fixed on you. The Earl absolving his friend from his former promises, urged him, not to prevent a match which promised so large a portion of felicity to his son. Sir Robert assured the Earl, he held their former engagements valid, till the match had been proposed to Lady Augusta and Henry ; but should it not meet with their acquiescence, that he would then follow his lordships counsel, nor controul the affections his son had placed upon an object so amiable. To this the Earl agreed, and the same day Henry and Lady Augusta were proposed to each other by their respective fathers. Both declared their esteem ; but both refused the long looked to union.

“ Some

“ Some little time after this, Sir Robert, still further to prove his son, signified his wish for his marrying, and said, if he would fix his choice upon a deserving object his consent should be easily obtained. Henry, thanking Sir Robert, assured him, at present he should prefer remaining single.

‘ Why that answer,’ said Sir Robert ;— ‘ you are free to declare your choice ;—I again tell you, I will not object.’

Again Sir,” replied Henry, “ I repeat the deep sense I have of your goodness ; but again I say, I think not at present of marriage.’

‘ Henry,’ said Sir Robert, with a severe tone, ‘ you meanly equivocate ; I supposed your heart the seat of integrity ; yet sure you are not so base—sure you dare not beneath my roof—I swear by heaven, and all it contains, if I find you guilty of such villainy, I will no longer acknowledge you as my son.’

“ Sir Robert was about to quit the apartment, but was detained by Henry exclaiming,

ing, in an agonized tone of voice, ‘ nay, hear me, my father ! alas ! what is it you suspect ? judge not so hastily, so cruelly, him who fears to accept the happiness you so kindly offer.’

‘ Tell me then, Henry,’ said Sir Robert, ‘ nor again give me such equivocating answers—tell me Sir, for you must know the passion you feel for Alicia is no secret to me—have you then declared it to her ? and have you won from that amiable girl a confession how dear you are to her, and now tell me you think not of marriage ? what then, young man, am I to infer from such conduct ?’

‘ Will you hear me with your wonted goodness ? will you, Sir Robert, credit the solemn asseverations of a son, whom till now you suspected not of a wish to deceive ;—from you, my father, I pretend not to conceal that I love Alicia ; but believe me, she knows it not ; she is indeed, Sir Robert, ignorant how infinitely dear she is to me ; and excuse me, Sir, there are circumstances  
why

why at present I wish her to remain so. If you value her future happiness, or my peace, I conjure you, allow my passion at present to rest in my own breast.'

" Sir Robert found, whatever were the reasons Henry had for his reserve, he was deaf to the arguments that he used upon the occasion, saying no more than that he would reconsider the affair, and upon his return from an excursion he was about to take with Lord Morville, he would make his final determination.

" You, Alicia, well recollect the agitation the countenance of Henry displayed on his return, and from that period do I date the decline of his health. He declared to Sir Robert, the following morning that he for ever renounced all hope of an union with you; that you were infinitely dear to him, and he feared ever must remain so; but that, whatever pain it might give him,



him, he trusted he had fortitude to conceal his feelings.

“ Various arguments were used by Sir Robert to influence Henry to declare why he thus acted so contradictory a part.

‘ Urge me not, my father, I conjure you ; no entreaties shall ever make me reveal, why I should not ask from Alicia a return of the passion she has inspired. My reasons are, trust me, powerful ones ;— but, I entreat you, ask them not of me :— alas ! you may by so doing, drive me to some deed of desperation ; some deed, Sir Robert, cruel as that which has placed me in this painful, torturing situation ; to avoid which I may be obliged to fly friends, home, my fortune and my country. Oh ! name it not, I again solemnly conjure you.’

Sir Robert, as he imparted the conversation Henry had held with him, his strange and agitated manner, which appeared as if oppressed by some weighty secret, almost



imagined his intellects were deranged;—a short time relieved us, however, from this dread, as Henry regained his composure.

“ When we went to London, and my son perceived the advances made by Mr. Carliel to you, he begged Sir Robert to forward the match, he quitted town till your determination was known; yet, at his return, he could not conceal the pleasure he felt that you had declined the offer.. Since our return to Malieveren, I have seen him grow evidently more unhappy; I have marked, with cruel anxiety, his altered looks. On you, Alicia, do my hopes rest; to you, though against his wish, have I declared the passion which I dread will drag him an early victim to the tomb. To Sir Robert this disclosure is a secret; but I thought if it was in fact a secret to you, it was unfit it should remain so. The life of Henry is at stake; and I hoped that you would, if in your power, assist to develope the cause of his strangely persisting to de-  
clare

declare he loves you, yet that he would conceal that love."

Alicia assured her Ladyship she had no clue to discover what motive had actuated Mr. Bertram in his refusal of the Baronet's offers regarding herself. "Ah! how shall I," said she, "in this conjuncture, prove to you, my dear Lady, as I ought, my gratitude, impressed as I now am with a deep sense of added obligation to you, my kind patroness, and to Sir Robert, who generously overlooked in me, deficiencies, that portionless, destitute of friend or relative, (save Mr. Meynel and yourselves) were rendered perhaps more exposed to observation; but you regarded not, for my sake, these disadvantages; you would have given your consent I should fill a place the fairest and proudest might envy. As I reflect on the sacrifices you would so generously, so kindly have made, I feel myself powerfully called upon to act as may best become the favored daughter of your choice. Absence

will weaken the impression Mr. Bertram now feels; he will forget what now so deeply interests him, and will form some new and more suitable attachment. I will hide myself in some distant country; I will retire to some convent, or, if it is the lot, my beloved Lady Bertram, you doom me to sustain, I will stay by you, I will exert myself in contributing to your comfort; I will endeavour at alleviating your woes; I will, the hardest task I can impose, conceal from Mr. Bertram the knowledge I have gained; I will treat him with coldness—with indifference.”

Lady Bertram folded Alicia to her bosom as the tears of maternal tenderness choaked her voice, “No, my beloved Alicia,” at length she said, “I cannot bear the idea of losing your society; but if I could Henry would not suffer that on his account you should quit my protection, was I inclined to part with you; no other home shall you know, my charming girl, but beneath the roof of Sir  
Robert

Robert Bertram ; yet I will hope time may unravel what now appears so dark and mysterious ; yet may we have more powerful claims upon you, Alicia, and from you and Henry shall our latter days seek comfort."

Twilight was shading the distant woods that surrounded, though not inclosed, the castle, when Alicia retiring to her chamber, sad and agitated, saw Henry slowly returning home across the lawn from one of his accustomed, solitary walks.—The window was open at which Alicia stood ; and as he cast his eyes up, they fell upon her, and a faint smile lightened over his pensive-looking countenance.

"Why, Mr. Bertram," said Alicia, "are you so regardless of Doctor Dealtry's orders, as to expose yourself to the dew, which must ere now have fallen?"

"I wandered on, Alicia, till I came to your favourite seat, and there I believe I forgot I had so far to return."

Henry passed on; and Alicia, throwing herself on a chair, gave way for a few minutes to the feelings which Mr. Bertram's languid and changed appearance caused in her heart;—these softened emotions of pity and tender recollection brought tears which relieved her from the suffocating and painful sensation of feeling with which she had quitted Lady Bertram. “But this,” said she, drying up her tears, “this must not be; it is not thus I am to fulfil the promises I have so lately made, and which my duty so forcibly commands; no, it is not by giving way to my own feelings that I am to support Lady Bertram under her afflictions.”

Alicia assuming that fortitude she had been so early taught, met the family at supper with her usual composure, and conversed with Henry upon such subjects as she knew would amuse and interest him. The look of kindness and of approbation she received

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from



from Lady Bertram repaid our heroine for the painful exertion she was making.

Alicia's eyes were now open to the sentiments she had long, unknown to herself, felt for Mr. Bertram; and she found the soft, the tender, friendship she had entertained for him was no longer as before, placid and serene; she now found an aching sense of disquiet had taken possession of her whole soul. Henry loved her, he had declared he loved; but not to her had he made the declaration. Strangely mysterious in his conduct, he had assented she was dear.—infinitely dear to him; yet had he persisted in refusing the permission granted by Sir Robert, his health, his strength, Lady Bertram had said, were the sacrifices made to the concealed love which agonized his mind.

“Ah! would to heaven,” sighed out Alicia, when again retired to her chamber, “I yet had been a stranger to what her Ladyship imparted. Alas! how now



shall I support myself! how conceal the anguish she imparted!"

Alicia's thoughts were fixed on what means she could employ to come at the secret Henry so carefully guarded. Oakdale—its horrors, its mysteries, rose to her imagination;—yes, doubtless Henry had visited the gloomy hall; there had he by some means learned what yet was concealed from herself; yes, there doubtless had he found her connexions, her birth were so objectionable as to preclude Sir Robert's consent; yet had he kindly, generously concealed them, lest that protection should be withdrawn from the child of some inimical person, which had been so amply granted to her as a stranger.

She would go to Oakdale—she would learn her fate—she would dare all danger, real, or such as might perhaps be, but illusive. The pallid form, seen starting as it were into view, rose to her thoughts.

“ Oh

“ Oh yes !” said she, audibly, “ I will dare all for Henry—for Lady Bertram—this strange mystery shall be searched ; too long has the SOLEMN INJUNCTION of my mother been neglected by me.”

Alicia now kneeling, prayed to him, to whom all hearts are open, for that composure of mind which threatened to desert her, and for such a portion of fortitude as would enable her to sustain the trial she must undergo. As Alicia arose from her devotions, she found the hurry and perturbation of spirits she had felt, calmed ; and more composed, she again seated herself at the window.

The twilight of the sky in July, even at the midnight hour, not completely veiling objects, brought back (as she faintly marked them through the surrounding gloom) many a tender recollection of the friendship of Henry Bertram. Oft amidst those beloved scenes had

listened with raptured ear to his conversation ; oft had she seen him mingle in every active sport ;—the grace, the dexterity she had beheld him display, rose to her mind—sadly, mournfully contrasted with his present languid appearance. Painfully she felt convinced Lady Bertram's fears for her son were but too justly founded : his virtues, his talents, his amiable disposition were recalled by Alicia,

“ Ah ! why,” she softly exclaimed, “ did I ever know he loved me but as a sister !”

She paused, and momentarily glanced a thought upon her own feelings for an object so amiable, so interesting ; she felt her heart throbbed with a passion stronger, more romantic, less easily controlled than friendship ; but resolved, if yet in her power, to stem in her breast that tide of passion to which Henry was fast falling a victim.

If

“ If more happily circumstanced,” thought Alicia, “ I might perhaps have forgot myself:—loved by Henry, approved by his parents, vanity and self-love might have soon rendered me unworthy of their esteem ; but now called, forcibly called upon to exert myself, I yet may prove to Lady Bertram she has not vainly bestowed her protection, not vainly lavished her bounty ; I may be permitted to evince that I am not ungrateful.”

Thus reasoned Alicia ; thus strove, by setting her duty before her, to turn her ideas from the fascination which would, she foresaw, wreck her happiness for ever ; for if at Oakdale Henry was deterred from speaking to her of his love, at Oakdale would she find fresh cause why it was necessary she should not think of him.

The day had, unperceived by Alicia, broke in the east, till lifting her eyes, she saw the tops of the trees waving with the first breath

of morning, and tinged with the golden light of the rising sun.

“I am much to blame in giving way to my emotions,” thought she, as hastily undressing, she retired to her bed.

Alicia, however, slept not till near the hour she usually rose, and then strange and frightful visions, connected with her waking thoughts, were presented to her fancy. In the morning, had not Lady Bertram been aware of the cause, the pale and agitated appearance of Alicia would have caused her Ladyship’s inquiries.

Henry’s eyes were fixed upon her with a scrutinizing look, but he spoke not to her on the subject.

Mr. Meynell had been above a fortnight at Harrowgate, and was not yet returned : he had promised the Earl of Knaresborough to accompany him to his seat in Derbyshire,



who was now impatient to set out from Malieveren, as his presence was necessary at Castle Cliffe. Preparations were also ordered to be made at Bertram Castle for the reception of the family. Henry insisted that no alteration should take place in the plans already fixed upon on his account, although the situation of Bertram was thought too cold for complaints, which it was feared his weak state threatened; nor would Sir Robert and Lady Bertram have acquiesced in this removal, had not Dr. Dealtry hinted that goat's whey would be beneficial to his patient, which at Bertram might be easily procured, by its vicinity to the wildest and best cultivated parts of Northumberland.

Two days after Alicia had the conversation with Lady Bertram, the principal part of which I have related, Henry drove Alicia to Malton, charged with an invitation from the Baronet and her Ladyship to Lord and Lady Morville, requesting they would accompany them into Northum-  
D 6 berland.

berland. Scarce could Alicia restrain her tears as they passed the lodge where she had laid so many hours, insensible of her danger, or the agonies of Henry Bertram on her account. Scarcely did Henry speak till they reached Malton; he appeared, indeed, to be afraid of entering on any subject, lest it might lead to one he found himself unable to converse upon.

## CHAPTER

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CHAPTER IV.  

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NEVER, in the eyes of Alicia, did Lady Augusta appear more amiable than as she beheld her that morning, with an affectionate concern painted upon her countenance, for the apparent weak state of Mr. Bertram—though this would only a short time before have filled her with disquiet.

Lady Morville refused to go to Bertram, alledging it was the most horrid place she knew, Oakdale excepted. “Besides,” said she, “we have promised to go into Derbyshire with the Earl.”

“Then,”

“Then,” said Henry, gravely, “I am to inform your mother, Lady Morville, you do not chuse to comply with the first request, of any consequence, she has made since you quitted her guidance. But this is no time to trifle—are you then, Mary, the only person to whom it is a secret that you soon will be the only child of your parents?”

Lady Morville looked full in Henry’s face, and as if she had never, till that moment, observed any alteration in his appearance, hastily arose, and throwing her arms round him, burst into tears and passionate exclamations of grief, that ended in a kind of hysteric, from which, when Lady Augusta and Alicia returned to the room, from whence they had been absent, they found her recovering.

Lady Morville assured her brother no consideration should prevent her from accompanying him into Northumberland. Her fears were now so completely roused, that  
she

she absolutely insisted upon Alicia's driving back to Malieveren.

“ My sister,” said Henry, when he, with his fair companion, were seated in the phæton, “ would have been very amiable, had she ever known adverse circumstances: she is giddy, because happy; reflection is not necessarily imposed upon her, and it is painful; her heart has the seeds of every virtue implanted in it—so has her Lord's; yet both want cultivation, for want of positive exercise;—as are their hearts, so are their understandings; no deficiency can be found in either, unless it is want of prudence, and that is sometimes ranked but as a negative virtue; but it is the want of it, I observe alike in both, that makes me tremble for their future happiness. Hereafter, Alicia, all your fortitude may be wanted to support Lady Bertram against the misery this gay heedless couple may prepare for her.”

“ Talk not of my fortitude, Henry, as Lady Bertram's support under difficulties;  
to



to you will the Baronet and her Ladyship look for comfort under any affliction which may occur; you shall be Lady Morville's counsellor; you, Sir, shall restrain her volatile Lord; those tasks Alicia must be unequal to.

Henry sighed, but made no reply.

When they again reached Malieveren, they found Mr. Meynell returned from Harrowgate, and it was agreed the Earl, Lady Augusta, and he should set out on the same day for Derbyshire, that the Baronet's family went North.

Alicia, during the day, appeared with all the cheerfulness she could assume; but, when at the hour of rest to her own reflections, her spirits fled, and painful and gloomy ideas took possession of her soul, which had been banished by constraint; for she had resolved, whatever pangs it might cause her, to bury her sorrows in her own breast, and devote herself to the sustaining  
Lady

Lady Bertram, who relied on her affection for support.

The following morning, Sir Robert and his guests, accompanied by Lady Bertram, went to Malton, to fix with Lord and Lady Morville the time of their departure. Mr. Bertram was engaged, Alicia learned, with writing.

“I will go,” thought she, “to the spot consecrated to me by the friendship of Henry.”

This was a building on an eminence in the park, erected the preceding summer at the request of Mr. Bertram, during a short absence the family made from the castle, to gratify and surprise Alicia at her return, who was charmed by the beautiful, various, and extensive prospect the hill commanded; which was, from one side over a large and well-cultivated tract of ground, interspersed with towns, villages, and gentlemen's seats; whilst,

whilst, on the other hand, the eye fell upon a narrow vale, through which flowed a clear stream; on whose wood-crowned banks rose towering, solemnly majestic, the still stately ruins of ——— Abbey; whose mouldering fabric had, by falling, choaked the stream which washed its rocky foundation, and formed a cascade; the murmur of whose fall could, in a still evening, be heard on this eminence, from which it was not far distant. This narrow valley was crossed at its extremity by rough and broken hills, beyond which they swelled into a mountainous appearance, which reached to the horizon, and shut out all further view, although they oft exhibited a change of scene; oft their tops were clad with mists, thick and dense, on which Henry and Alicia loved to behold the effect of wind or sun, whilst raising, lowering, or dispersing them.

• In this building was kept a small but judiciously chosen library, with some musical instruments; and the walls were decorated  
with

with sketches taken from nature—chiefly views of places in the neighbourhood of Malieveren.

The path Alicia took brought her, by a steep ascent, to the back of the building. Entering by the door on that side, she saw Henry standing at the window, with a book half closed in his hand.

“ I thought,” said Alicia, “ you had been engaged writing, now I find you here studying.”

“ Rather moralising, Alicia,” said he, offering the book for her inspection.

It was Dr. Young's Night Thoughts. Alicia cast a look of mournful expression as taking the volume, she closed it on the table. The tears started from her eyes, but dashing them off, and again turning to Mr. Bertram, “ Why,” said she, “ do you thus, Henry, indulge in solitude? why, by chusing subjects of so melancholy

a hue, seek, as it were, to depress your spirits?"

"Alas! Alicia, life has lost its charms; my health is, I now find, gone; I totter on this side eternity; it becomes me to think, then, on a subject so near at hand as my dissolution probably is. I would not needlessly alarm you, Alicia, but it is necessary to guard you against a surprise; I have hinted this to you before, but you appeared not to wish to understand me. I have, Alicia, made up a packet, which will, when I have ceased to exist, inform you of the agony I have endured—the horrid, the mysterious cause is there explained."

Alicia had not power for a minute to speak; but recovering herself, "Why not now, Henry, explain to me the horrid mystery, of which you talk? say, have I not a right to be informed—does it not concern me;—alas! Henry, the season for reserve is past; whilst I listen to you I can think  
• nothing worth balancing against a life so dear.



dear. How can you so calmly talk of your dissolution;—think you in quitting this world, Henry, you have nothing to regret; it is erring against your own heart to say you are regardless of the lasting grief of your parents, the deep sorrow of your friends. We are not now met, Henry, as oft we have in this place, so dear to both, to cheat time by conversation on amusing subjects—such times are past.”

“I have,” said Alicia, “a right to share your grief, because it relates to myself: I urge not friendship; it yields to paternal authority—to maternal tenderness; nor what you concealed from Sir Robert and Lady Bertram shall I a friend dare to ask; but I solemnly adjure you to answer me this one question—have you not, Henry, been at Oakdale, and learnt there what I have a just claim to know?”

Taking Alicia's hand, Henry seated her by him; and after a full pause, with his eyes fixed upon her, in a voice that trembled,

trembled, he replied, “Yes, Alicia, I have been at Oakdale.”—Again he was silent.

“Oh, tell me then, I beseech you, what did you learn there?”

“Fain, my beloved Alicia, would I be spared on a subject so exquisitely painful to me, fain would I have buried in my heart my grief, my disappointment; I would have fondly hoped Alicia would for ever have been spared the knowledge of the passion which prompted my visit. Ah! fondly I hoped you would not have shared my sorrow.”

Though Alicia spoke not, yet her expressing countenance declared she had already participated in his sufferings.

“But you,” continued Mr. Bertram, “are no longer a stranger to the passion I did feel; that I do yet, spite of all my efforts, feel for you; I know that the mistaken tenderness of Lady Bertram has imparted this to you; but she knows not, Alicia, that it is the sad knowledge I obtained at Oakdale, which told me my love for Alicia

was

was a guilty, a forbidden one, that thus drags me to an early grave. Alas! I cannot conquer my love! in vain hitherto has been my endeavours—vainly, Alicia, have I strove to behold you, as I ought, so near a relative.”

“What do you mean, Henry?”

“Alas! is it too true, Alicia—we are indeed nearly connected; but I will strive to inform you how I came into possession of your secret. Carefully had I guarded my love from all observation, fearful that, from the hints you had given concerning some mysterious kind of connexion subsisting between you and the family from whom I was descended; that, upon your learning your birth and story fully, you might then find obstacles existed that might make an union with me not to be desired; till that period I waited, hoping, fearing; but when your danger made me no longer able to constrain myself, my love became known to Sir Robert. By him, by Lady Bertram was I urged to disclose my sentiments to you.

During

During your illness, oft your delirious fancy pourtrayed to you the gloomy chamber of Oakdale; oft you raved of it in terms your attendants understood not, tho' I did. I found, from these disjointed sentences, that at Oakdale your fate was to be disclosed; which you dreaded to encounter its horrors; and I learned also the way to enter the concealed chamber, and likewise where the papers which contained the mystery of your birth were to be found. To Oakdale then, Alicia, I went, for I could no longer evade the proposals of Sir Robert, when he censured and entreated by turns, and wrought me to agonies insupportable;—you I thought might long remain ignorant of your own fate—I could no longer bear the suspense. Oh my father! it is—it is you, who have undone me!—my mother too—Oh, were not my sufferings sufficient without her mistaken fondness! imparting them to Alicia, who knew not that the heart of her son throbbed with a guilty passion, against which nature herself revolts. In vain does reason  
condemn;

condemn; in vain does religion threaten; shuddering, I listen to the anathema God and man alike pronounce against me; I would have wished to have been spared this humiliating confession; I would have then retained your friendship; Alicia would not have been taught to hate the wretched Henry."

The extreme agitation Mr. Bertram sustained, communicated itself to Alicia; and as her countenance reflected that of his, though marked with an expression of surprise, which in Henry was despair of a wild and frantic kind.

"Henry, my dear Henry, torture me not; but at once say what you learned!"

Suddenly he interrupted her, hastily rising, and throwing as it were from him the hand he had held, "Dear Henry! is it you, Alicia, who calls me dear Henry? Have I



not already told you it is right, it is necessary you should hate me."

The manner, the tone of his voice seemed wild and distracted. He was traversing the room with hasty and unequal steps—"I tell you, Alicia, look not on me thus; you seem as if you pitied and partook of my sorrows;—I say it is madness! you make my brain turn round!—know you not my danger? are you not sensible, foolish girl, that I stand upon the edge of a precipice? see you not the ground on which I stand shrinks beneath my giddy steps? see you not, Alicia, the gulph that yawns to receive me? Go, go, I charge you!"

Pausing, Henry turned full round upon Alicia, fixing his eyes with an air of distraction on her, that, as it were by magic, instantaneously roused these latent powers of her mind with which she was endowed.

“If I do fall,” said Mr. Bertram, with a stern air, “eternity shall cover me; I cannot support the anguish I have endured much longer. Whilst you were a stranger to my feelings, I strove to conceal, I strove to conquer them; but Lady Bertram has removed that restraint; she told you of my love; you know my guilt.”

He now advanced almost close to Alicia, who, rising with an air of self-recollection, and that dignity which was inherent in her, with a solemnity of manner, addressed the frantic Henry:—“Recollect, Mr. Bertram, yourself; remember the respect due to your own character; give not way to such transports of mind as leave you not a free agent. Is it you, the exalted Henry, who shrinks before passions which it is your duty to subdue? is it possible I can behold you, whose virtues, whose intellectual powers soared above the common race of mortals, now talking like a wretch loaded with crimes, sinking under despair? Debase not yourself,

self, Mr. Bertram, by making a supposition that you are capable of the one, or that your active and energetic mind can ever be the prey of the other. Your friendship has hitherto been my pride, my solace ;—allow it still to be so ; but deem me not, Henry, under the influence of a passion like your's, wild and ungovernable.”

The recollection of Henry appeared to return ; he attempted not to interrupt Alicia, nor to hinder her departure, till her hand was on the lock to open the door ; then, with a sudden spring, he caught hold of her dress—“ Nay, stay,” he cried, “ Alicia—look on this,” and he led her to the largest piece of painting in the room : it was a view taken by Henry from recollection, and deeply imprinted on his memory.

Alicia was seen leaning against a tree, whilst Mary and William March looked over the projecting rock, from whence the  
unhappy

unhappy Mr. Bouchier had rashly precipitated himself.

“Recollect you not, Alicia, this scene?” said Henry, pointing to it.

“I do recollect it, Henry.”

“It was, Alicia, only the day preceding that you did, by imparting your emotions to me, at beholding the gloomy hall, awaken a passion, of the existence of which I was ignorant. Oh yes! Alicia, that visit to Oakdale was fatal to my peace. Alas! then was it I first knew that I loved;—yes, I saw you gave me a preference; I heard you declare an unlimited confidence in my friendship; and I no longer beheld you as before. Other sentiments filled my heart; less controulable passions usurped the dominion. Oh yes! then was I sentenced to misery for ever! Oh, then, that my sad fate had been arrested; that then I had learned Alicia was the daughter of——! (throwing himself at her feet)—Oh! no, no, I cannot, will not tell you.”—Then, hastily

rising, with more of frenzy than despair, he exclaimed, "No, I will not profane the name of Bertram! I know it is false; Sir Robert is not, never could be such a villain!—no, Alicia, he thus cruelly to have abandoned you—no, it must be false! it is the accursed, the diabolical invention of the arch fiend himself! I will go to Oakdale—its horrors shall perish—those bloody testimonies shall no more blast the sight—the gloomy hall shall blaze to the skies; yes, I will do this—so shall you be mine; yes, those lying documents shall no longer separate us—no longer hinder me from saying how ardently I love; you shall not forbid my transports!"

He had, before the conclusion of his speech, grasped her, with a frantic and empassioned air, to his heart; but Alicia, exerting all that strength (which I before have had occasion to remark) she possessed, broke from his hold, and, pushing him from, her, "Go," said she, Henry, (with all the  
calmness



calmness she could assume) go and recover your recollection ; your language and actions are alike tinged with madness ; I pity you, Sir, but will not tamely suffer insult."

Alicia seated herself, whilst Henry stood, as if immovable, against the wall where she had left him. A fixed and stupid kind of melancholy now rested on those features, which a few minutes before had been lighted by a frenzied wildness. To quit him now, to leave him to the despair to which he appeared abandoned, this she could not bear ; she saw it was necessary to rouse him, for he had now stood some minutes perfectly still, with his looks bent upon her with all the stupor of an incurable melancholy.

Alicia rose and took his hand ; yet his countenance changed not its terrifying and alarming expression. Then pointing to a portrait she had from memory drawn—"Mr. Bertram," said she, in a voice whose full, mel-  
low,

low, and deep tones were well adapted for her purpose, "Did you not, as you saw me give the last strokes to that portrait, solemnly invoke the spirit of my fainted mother? Remember, Henry, what then you said, what then you vowed. Did you not then swear to be, in her stead, my protector—that, as far as you could, you would lighten for me all the ills of life? Is it, by rendering yourself miserable, by suffering your passions to triumph over your reason, you are to do this? Is it, by the wild expression of misery that sits on your countenance, I am to be made happy? Do you deem me insensible to your uniform friendship, to your former virtues? Do you think I can know peace or happiness whilst Henry Bertram is miserable?"

The countenance of Henry had twice changed whilst Alicia spoke. From their fixed stupor his eyes quitted their object, and fell on the floor, as if afraid to trust them with a longer gaze, and a momentary flush crossed

crossed his cheek, which was succeeded by an ashy and death-like paleness; life appeared as if retreating; he seemed incapable of articulation, or even of respiration, as he sunk on a seat, and burst into tears. As Alicia stood by, she found her own cheeks moistened by her feelings. Bitter were her tears; her own happiness, and that of every one she loved and held dear, seemed blasted as she looked on Henry, whose perturbation of spirits she rejoiced to see thus seasonably relieved by tears; for she had feared, a confirmed distraction, or death itself; she went to the window, fearful of checking the kindly drops.

At length Mr. Bertram rose, and, advancing to Alicia, said, with a tolerable degree of composure, "This day has sealed my fate; this fatal interview dooms me to banishment, or it will accelerate the dissolution I have for months foreseen was near at hand. I ask you not, Alicia, to pardon me—I expect it not; you can no

more forget the insult I dared offer, than I can forgive my own madness; but I was rent by contending passions, I was no longer indeed in possession of reason; but I have done—I will not now trust myself on this subject. Adieu, Alicia!” he said, without raising his eyes, “Oh, perhaps adieu for ever!”

“Oh! go not alone, Henry; you are ill, you are unable, unfit to go alone—I will walk with you to the Castle.”

“I find, Alicia, you suppose I have meditated some desperate deed, but you are mistaken; I shall return straight home, but it must be alone; and if we meet not soon again, remember, as you value the peace of Sir Robert and Lady Bertram—speak not, I conjure you, of Oakdale.”

The calm and resolute manner of Henry quieted the fear that had taken possession of her. “Go, then,” said she, “Henry; for our, for their peace, I assuredly shall not mention aught you have so strangely alluded to regarding Oakdale to  
Sir

Sir Robert or her Ladyship ;—when next we meet, I shall ask an explanation.”—Henry shook his head with a mournful air, as opening the glass-door that led out from the front of the building without speaking ; then pulling his hat over his eyes, he descended, with faltering and unequal steps, the hill, whilst Alicia stood in the window with an agonized heart, looking till she could no longer behold him, as shrouded from sight, he passed along a close walk, that was, by its gloom, well suited to the present state of his spirits.—Now throwing herself on a seat, she gave way to the emotions she had so painfully suppressed ; the dark mystery of her fate filled her with an undescrivable horror. “Alas! who then am I? how am I allied to Henry, in whose guilt too surely I partake—deeply partake?” for she felt convinced his love could not exceed that which filled her own heart. Although he was sinking, for her sake, to an untimely tomb, she felt thankful that, in this trying interview, she had

E 6

been



been enabled to sustain her fortitude, that her presence of mind had not forsaken her, and that she concealed from Henry the passion which must have contributed to his misery. She resolved to write to him, and beg he would disclose to her what he had learned at Oakdale regarding her birth; for she would not again seek an interview with him.

## CHAPTER

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**CHAPTER V.**

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**A**LICIA now, by a different road from what Henry had taken, returned to the castle, which she entered by a back way, and went to Lady Bertram's dressing-room, as less likely there to encounter Mr. Bertram. She had set some time when Mrs. Rowley hastily opened the door—

“ My Lady wishes to see you, Miss Sleigh.—Alas ! Mr. Bertram ! ”

“ What !—Oh ! what of Mr. Bertram ? ”

“ Too soon you must know—he is dead, or dying ! ”

“ Dead ! ”

“Dead! dying! said Alicia, with a frantic air, as she rushed past Mrs. Rowley;—but, ere she reached the door, she sunk on the floor in a state of insensibility. From Lady Bertram’s dressing-room, Alicia was conveyed to her own chambers, where it was not, till a vein had been opened, that she recovered. When she came to herself, so far as to be sensible, she saw Lady Augusta seated by the bed.

“Oh! tell me, my dear friend, is it so?” said Alicia, in a faint and trembling voice; “is Mr. Bertram”—she paused—“Oh! no, sure it is but some horrid dream; I have had many such lately.”

“Be composed, my sweet Alicia, Mr. Bertram was taken suddenly ill; the family has been greatly alarmed; but he is now better, and Sir Robert and Lady Bertram are with him. I have orders to take charge of you—so submit—lie still, and endeavour to obtain rest; I will go and inform Lady Bertram you are recovering.”

Lady

Lady Bertram returned with Lady Augusta, and tenderly embraced Alicia without speaking; who, smothering her own sorrows, said "God will, I trust, hear our prayers, and restore to health him we mourn for. Too amiable for the age in which he was born, he was but lent to me for a time: I ought to submit to the decrees of Providence; but I feel the task will be a severe one."

Lady Bertram soon quitted Alicia, who then enquired more particularly concerning the illness of Henry; and learned from Lady Augusta, that, when he returned from walking, he had scarcely seated himself and desired Mrs. Rowley to give him a glass of wine, for he found himself much fatigued, when he fainted, and had continued in that state for some time, and when recovered, had again relapsed; that the family had been sent for from Malton—at the same time, Mr. Hoskins, from Middleham, and Dr. Dealtry, from York; that Mr.  
Hoskins

Hofkins had not scrupled to declare his fears that those deep faintings were but the prelude to a speedy dissolution, as they proved his extreme weakness ; but the faintings now over, he slept—and yet,” concluded Lady Augusta, “ we will hope ; Mr. Bertram’s natural constitution the faculty have declared good ; and was he but able to go to a warmer climate, wonders may be done towards restoring him.”

Alicia sighed—she dared scarce hope.

When the physician arrived, he gave it as his opinion, that Mr. Bertram had sustained some sudden shock, and had undergone some severe agitation of mind, against which he had particularly ordered him to guard ; that the danger was not yet over, as a fever was not unlikely to take place, from the agitated state he was in ; that he felt himself at a loss, and begged some other of the faculty might be called in.

Messengers



Messengers were instantly dispatched, but, ere any other physician arrived, the disorder, Dr. Dealtry found, instead of settling, as he was at first inclined to suppose, chiefly on the brain, proved a low nervous fever, which racked all his friends with alternate hopes and fears for nearly three weeks, when the youth and strength of his constitution at length began to conquer: slowly the disease gave way; and the faculty, who were alternately, at this period, the inmates of the castle, still feared much for their patient. Dr. Dealtry, who before this last illness entertained some fear of Mr. Bertram having a tendency to a consumptive habit, now dreaded it more than his brethren less acquainted with him.

Lady Morville had returned to Malton, after a few week's stay at Malieveren;—her grief, which broke out above all bounds, served but further to distress her mother, with whom, however, Lady Augusta continued, and by her kind attentions administered

stered to Lady Bertram and Alicia such comfort as she could draw from the anxious state of affairs.

At the expiration of five weeks from their interview on their favourite hill, Henry enquired after Alicia of Lady Bertram, but expressed no wish to see her ; although oft, during the delirium of his fever, he supposed she was present.

The physicians entreated their patient, as soon as he was able, to be an hour together out of bed, to take the air in a carriage, into which, weak, feeble, and emaciated, Alicia saw him from a window lifted like an infant, and that very day it was that he enquired after her. She had been expressly ordered not to attempt, during his illness, to see him ; as to Dr. Dealtry the Baronet had in part communicated the cause of his son's illness. Severely did Alicia feel this prohibition, which now she hoped would no longer exist, as Henry was able to sit up,  
and

and Lady Augusta had visited him for a few minutes.

Lady Bertram had questioned Alicia regarding the agitation of her son; but Alicia saying, she had pressed Mr. Bertram to declare what had sunk upon his spirits, and that he still carefully guarded the secret, evaded her ladyship's question.

So completely had her fears for Henry's life absorbed every other idea, so painful was the anxious state of suspense she had endured for the preceding five weeks; that the last interview she had with Henry, although his illness was doubtless caused by the extreme agitation he had sustained during that interview, was seldom thought of by her.

Henry recovered so rapidly, after his being able to set up, that in a week's time he rode as far as Malton-park in the chaise with Lady Bertram.

Alicia

Alicia thought that Henry had at length triumphed over his passion. "I am not," said she, "suffered to behold him, except at a distance; surely he has forgot me! Happy Henry!" sighed she, as this painful truth pressed on her; that it was not by her to be attained; but she found it was not in her power to forget how infinitely dear he was to her;—yet the love Henry declared at their last meeting certainly could not be obliterated by sickness. Severely had he, doubtless, suffered on her account; he had said it was a guilty and forbidden passion; why then did she feel regret at the dear-bought victory he had gained over himself?

Henry continued to recover, and Alicia, spite of her judgment, and although satisfied it was necessary for the peace of both, felt unhappy, anxious, nay at times miserable, that he had not solicited an interview with her. She wished also to learn what had been revealed to him at Oakdale regarding herself,

herself, but resolved not to enquire by writing—a plan she had once fixed upon for obtaining information.

Mr. Meynel yet remained at Malieveren, unwilling to quit the Baronet whilst under such distress ; the Earl of Knaflborough had also staid till Henry was pronounced out of immediate danger.

Alicia was summoned one day, when Mr. Bertram had rode out with Sir Robert, to attend on her venerable guardian, Mrs Meynel ; by whom, after some preparation, she was informed Mr. Bertram was speedily going to set out for the continent, the physicians having unanimously agreed, that, in all probability, unless he removed into a warmer climate, he would not see another summer ; that he had made no objection, provided he might not be restricted to place, and travel with only one servant ; but Sir Robert and Lady Bertram had insisted upon accompanying him, which he warmly objected



jected to, "and principally," said Mrs. Meynel, on your account, Alicia, as you are not to be of the party ; yet Mr. Bertram still refuses to see you."

" Not see me, Mrs. Meynel !" said the trembling and agitated Alicia ; " does then Mr. Bertram refuse to behold me ? will he go to a distant land, where I shall never, never look on him again, and not vouchsafe to say, Adieu ?"

" No, my sweet girl, Henry does not, I dare say, intend that ; he told me not an hour ago, you yet were too dear to him—that yet he dared not behold you ; that many reasons concurred to render an absence from you necessary ; but I will, Mrs. Meynel, said he, ere I quit Alicia and my native country, summon fortitude to see her ; but I find my mind as weak as my body—I shrink from every trial."

The fine features of Alicia glowed with an animation that of late had forsook them, as she listened to Mrs. Meynel ; love and  
hope

hope played in quick succession over her countenance.

“ I have, Alicia,” continued her guardian, “ entreated for your residing with me, but left it at length to Lady Bertram’s decision ; who delegated to me the office of informing you what is fixed for Mr. Bertram : go, then, my dear girl, her ladyship waits you in her dressing-room.”

Alicia instantly obeyed, and found her ladyship’s fortitude had so far forsaken her, that she received her with tears, silence, and caresses. Alicia spoke of Mr. Bertram’s recovery ; and calmly talked of her hopes regarding the further re-establishment of his health, by the change of climate.

“ I go,” said Lady Bertram, “ without flattering myself I shall behold my son ever restored to his former strength ; yet I trust in the Divine Being, who blessed me with so amiable a child, that he will grant him  
longer

longer to my prayers. From you, my beloved Alicia, you have been informed, I must be separated : to me it will be a grievous separation—but it is a needful one ; never could Henry hope to forget his passion, if constantly beholding its object so lovely and interesting.

“ Mr. Meynel has kindly offered to protect you, and treat you as his child, during my absence ; but this worthy and truly respectable man is so far advanced in years, that I wish you not to take up your constant residence with him ; though now in full possession of every faculty, and active as most men of half his age, yet a long state of debility may succeed ; if then you were resident with him, you would be tied, perhaps, for all the spring of your days.

“ Lady Augusta entreated for your company warmly this morning when I spoke to her of my leaving England ; but there again an objection exists : the Earl’s sentiments in your favour were the subject of conversation last winter in the gay world, and his roof  
must

must not shelter you, unless your resolutions regarding the offer which his son and daughter alike wished you to accept, should change, and you, my dear Alicia, become Countess of Knaresborough. With Lady Morville, therefore Alicia, must you reside : to your prudence do I trust for restraining the too giddy Mary. In pecuniary matters Sir Robert will leave such orders as he would, had you been our daughter. I have in part engaged a young woman, as your servant ; and we propose leaving the faithful and long tried James, as your footman, as you must, Alicia, not go into Lord Morville's family without some establishment. I shall hope to hear from you by almost every mail, and I shall also write frequently to you."

" I will, without repining, my beloved protectress, submit with patience to this separation from you ; it is Mr. Bertram's desire : if still he will not behold me, and his health renders exile no longer needful, *I will* cheerfully banish myself. In Scotland lives a friend of my mother's, lately returned

from Jamaica, who will, I doubt not, afford me an asylum." She thanked Lady Bertram for the noble generosity she and Sir Robert had evinced upon this occasion towards her : and in reply, her ladyship gave our heroine fresh assurances of her love and friendship ; and concluded by saying, some change might take place, was Henry's health established, or would he divulge the mysterious secret ; " and yet, my Alicia, I shall hope, fondly hope, that nearer ties may yet connect you to me."



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## CHAPTER VI.

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THE day following that, in which Alicia had learned she was shortly to be separated from Henry, also from her dear Lady Bertram and Sir Robert, Lady Augusta, at the desire of Mr. Bertram, informed Alicia he would dine that day with the family, as he was sufficiently recovered to do so; and he found Lady Bertram was very anxious he should, but Alicia did not wish it.

“ Mr. Bertram,” said Lady Augusta,  
“ sat down to write you this, Alicia; but the  
F 2 agitation

agitation he sustained was evident: he seemed afraid of saying too much; and I told him, that though I would take a message, I would not be the bearer of such a billet as he was beginning to write."

The blood mounted to the face and neck of Alicia, then fled in hurried streams to her heart. Henry had not forgot her; he was yet as solicitous to avoid giving her pain. "Say, then, my kind, my dear Lady Augusta—say, then, to Henry, his friend, his——, say that Alicia has no right to prescribe to him, but will rejoice—yes, most sincerely rejoice to see him as before."

It was some time after Lady Augusta had quitted Alicia, ere she could attend to dressing for dinner; and Henry was already in the room, where it was served, when she entered. Alicia advanced, and held out her hand to him, whose pale and languid appearance nearly overcame her. Scarcely dared she trust her voice: she saw too the agitation

tion of Henry; and, in a few low and almost indistinct words, congratulated him on his convalescence. These compliments were returned by him in nearly the same kind of articulation. Henry sat with evident pain till the dessert was placed on the table, when he quitted the room. Lady Bertram, whose fears were roused, followed.

“Poor Henry!” said the Baronet, as he drew his handkerchief across his eyes—“how is every fond hope I had formed for him blasted!”

“I am sure, Sir Robert,” said Morville, “Henry is vastly better.”

Alicia had supported herself whilst Mr. Bertram was present, but found she was no longer able to do so, and left the table. Lady Augusta apologized for her, and said, “Miss Sleigh had been complaining of the head-ache all the morning.”

In her chamber, for a few minutes, Alicia gave way to the tender sorrow she had experienced; and then, with apparent composure, returned to the company. Scarcely had she seated herself, when the Marquis and Marchioness of Felton made their appearance, calling again, as they had promised, on their return from Scotland. The Marquis felt much for the illness of Mr. Bertram, and declared they would have been of the party to the Continent, had there not been hopes of a reconciliation taking place with the Duke.

Henry kept his chamber the remainder of that day, but joined the family the following one. Both he and Alicia were less agitated at this second meeting; and the sweet manner of the charming Marchioness, and elegant conversation of her Lord, contributed to banish the restraint of the party, and to give renewed life and spirits to Henry.

“ Mr.

“Mr. Rofs,” the Marquis said, “had asserted his claim on the family estate; that the gentleman now in possession was far advanced in years, and without wife or child; and when he found Mr. Rofs was supported so powerfully, he agreed to relinquish all claim, provided he might possess the seat-house, and a certain yearly sum; which, to avoid the tedious law-suit that his long and undisturbed possession would cause, was assented to by Mr. Rofs, whose legal right to the title of Baronet no one offered to dispute; and certain forms were alone wanted to fully confirm it, which, when done, the Dutches had assured her son she feared not the Duke’s being willing to receive him and his fair bride with kindness.

After a short stay, this charming couple bade adieu to their friends at Malton Park and Malieveren; and then only three days intervened, before Alicia would be parted—



alas! she feared for ever—from Henry. He would go too with the horrid secret unrevealed, which had brought him to the brink of the grave; yet his agitated and frantic manner, when he had spoke of it, deterred her from inquiry; and Alicia looked back on the days which were passed; she wondered how fast they had flown, for but one single night remained; for, ere noon the next day, Sir Robert and Lady Bertram intended to quit Malieveren—Henry likewise would leave her; and she felt as if at that time she should be forsaken by all who had loved her; that she should be forlorn, destitute, and abandoned. Alicia endeavoured, when she said “good night,” to do it with her usual accent; but, as Lady Bertram held out her hand, and as Alicia pressed it to her lips, a tear fell on it; and, without daring to lift her eyes up, or trust her voice, she quitted the family, and retired to her chamber; where, finding it was impossible to combat her feelings longer, she

she gave herself up for some time to all the luxury of grief.

Her candle burnt out ; she undrew the curtain, and, through the grey dawn of morning, caught an imperfect glimpse of Henry's favourite building, as it towered over the woods ; her eyes were fixed on it, and wrapt in thought, she felt scarce conscious of her existence. The sun rose ; and as its rays fell on the windows, they were seen reflecting the yellow splendour of the glorious planet ; the mist slowly rose, steaming from the lake, mixing, as it ascended towards the heavens, with the lighter atmosphere ; yet was each charm of early day unheeded by the sad Alicia ; and the loud carol of the birds drew not her attention ; for, insensible to these charms that used to open her heart to pleasing reflections, to calm and elevate her soul, she stood, as it were, immovable. One spot alone attracted her attention ; for still her eyes were fixed upon the building where she had spent, the

preceding year, so many happy hours, and where this she had known such exquisite misery. A figure issued from it, which, even at that distance, she imagined to be Henry, who, lingering a few minutes at the top of the hill, descended it. Alicia did not quit the window till she saw her conjectures realized. It was indeed Mr. Bertram who, issuing out of the close walk, crossed the lawn. Although Alicia withdrew from his observation, she yet kept a station from whence she could observe Henry, who looked paler and worse than he had done for many, many days; his countenance bore the traces of evident and recent agitation. He entered the castle by one of the back-ways; and listening, Alicia heard him ascend the stair-case—stopping as he passed the door of her apartment, and the long-drawn sigh spoke the subject of his meditations, as softly he proceeded along the gallery to his own chamber.

Every idea now vanished from Alicia but one, which proudly domineered over reason, and triumphed over fortitude;—still was she beloved; for her had Henry watched the night, else why secretly revisit the spot she loved, which was endeared to both by a thousand pleasing and tender recollections; that he had gone to indulge these recollections, was proved by the time he had chosen to visit the building.

“Alas! why should this,” thought Alicia, “fill my bosom with exultation, with pleasure? he will suffer from thus imprudently exposing himself to the midnight air, to the chill damp of early morning.—The tears again rolled over her cheeks; she threw up the sash; the clear air, fresh and pure, fanned her.—“I will go,” thought she, “and, wandering through these delightful shades, endeavour to dispel painful ideas.”

Alicia took a path which could not be seen from Henry's window, lest he might guess at her feelings by his own, and thus she might add to his sufferings. The air and exercise contributed, with her own endeavours, to calm her late perturbation of mind; and she returned before Lady Bertram's usual hour of rising, with an appearance of tolerable composure; and, changing her dress for one more suitable to the hour, she went to the breakfast-room, where she found her worthy guardian, Mr. Meynel; who, after much friendly conversation, said to her, "My dear Alicia, if you should hereafter find your situation in this family no longer eligible, remember, I have claims upon you which I expect then will be attended to: seek, then, Alicia, a home with me. Sir Robert has taken care to settle a sum upon you which will be sufficient for your expences;—but you have been Lady Bertram's almoner; you will lose that post, and I must, Alicia, constitute you mine. In this book you will find a sum for present



use; and I shall also, my dear girl, delegate another office to you. Mrs. Dalrymple's daughters will, I fear, be left without those advantages which, had she possessed the power, she would have bestowed upon them: I therefore beg you to write, and entreat those girls may be entrusted to your care for a time. You, of course, will go to town with the Morvilles, when a school may be fixed upon by you for the daughters of your friend, for whose expences draw upon me."

Deeply did this instance of Mr. Meynel's attention to her, and of his own goodness of heart, penetrate that of Alicia; ere she had expressed the deep sense she entertained of his kindness, Sir Robert entered.

"Henry," said he, "insists upon setting out, as was proposed, to-day, although he appears much worse than he was yesterday, and is, I fear, very unable to begin his journey."

Alicia's

Alicia's heart sickened as she listened to Sir Robert's account ; which was confirmed, indeed, by Mr. Bertram's looks, who made his entrance with her Ladyship ;—he talked of the journey in a strain of cheerfulness, which ill agreed with the air of dejection that, spite of his efforts to banish it, clouded his features. Alicia also spoke of hopes which at that moment existed not in her heart, nor animated her countenance ; all appeared evidently to desire the others to believe, that Henry's restoration to health was reduced to a certainty by the purposed journey ; and that, cheered by this thought, separation from friends was nothing ; that, in looking to this period, time itself would be annihilated, and that happiness would follow him on his return to England ; yet these hopes, these sentiments, were far from the hearts of all present. Frequent pauses were made ; and it seemed as if the thread of discourse broken, would never be renewed.

The

The constraint which the party at the Castle felt was, however, relieved, by the entrance of Lord and Lady Morville, who, instead of bidding adieu to their friends, as was expected at Malieveren, declared they would accompany them to Dover, and see them embark; and her Ladyship gaily insisted on Lady Augusta and Alicia adding to the party, and that Mr. Meynel should be their escort. The ladies, however, both declined. Mr. Meynel said, Lady Augusta and himself had always purposed attending Sir Robert and Lady Bertram to London, where the Earl had fixed to meet them; and that they were together to proceed to his house in Devonshire for a short time.

Lady Bertram was at length obliged to give a look of reproof, which silenced the entreaties of the heedless Lady Morville for Alicia's accompanying them to Dover, which she knew would be alike painful to her and Henry. In another room, Lady Bertram took a tender and affectionate farewell of our heroine

heroine, giving her, as a pledge of her friendship, her own picture, with that of Sir Robert, elegantly set, with several other valuable ornaments. “The levity Mary has displayed this morning,” said her Ladyship, “has shocked me greatly; her heedlessness is truly unconquerable; and though she has felt severely from the illness of her brother, who is now about to quit his native country, perhaps never to return, yet the idea of the pleasure she will receive in a jaunt unthought of till this morning, has put her in as gay a train of spirits, as if no unpleasant circumstance attended the journey. Her heart is good; and yet, Alicia, I tremble for her future conduct.”

Sir Robert sent to inform her Ladyship all was in readiness for their departure; and she again embraced and bade Alicia adieu.

The carriages and servants waited. Alicia took leave of all her friends but Henry, as they passed to their respective chaises—he stood

stood talking to her upon some subject of little or no importance.—“Henry,” said Sir Robert, “we wait for you; the Morvilles and Mr. Meynel are out of fight.”

“Adieu,” said Henry (putting a packet into the hand he had held); this, my Alicia, contains what you must soon otherwise learn.”—With a sudden spring, he seated himself by Sir Robert in the coach; the door was shut, and they drove off.



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CHAPTER VII.

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WITH a very heavy heart, Alicia returned into the castle, and went into the apartment, where hung a picture of Mr. Bertram, drawn about the time when she first knew him—a manly-looking, but youthful figure, with bright glossy hair curling over his open forehead. “Alas!” said the agonized Alicia, “never, never, Henry, shall I again behold you; no, never shall the sad, the forlorn Alicia, again behold him who is deservedly dear to her; with you, Henry, is all happiness fled;—who now  
will

will be interested for Alicia? She is alone in the world—for all, all seems desolate, abandoned.”

In some degree recovered from the first emotions of anguish she felt at the idea of separation, Alicia strove at least to change the cause, by substituting one sorrow for another, and sat down to investigate the packet Mr. Bertram had given her; but was obliged to desist, to attend Sir Charles and Lady Hutter, who, mistaking the day of their departure, had come to take leave of the family at Malieveren, previous to their quitting it. This visit detained Alicia till towards evening. Never did she feel exertion more painful or less successful;—no sooner did she see the Baronet and his Lady drive from the door, than giving orders not to be disturbed, she retired to her chamber, and unfolded the packet, which contained several sheets of paper; in the first of which, she read as follows:—

“ It

“ It would, Alicia, be superfluous, were I to attempt describing the agitation of my mind—Alas ! you witnessed the temporary insanity I underwent (for such allow me to style it, in excuse for my words, and actions) when last we met at our favourite retreat. The illness which followed also proved the violence of my perturbation ; but these proofs of the war in my soul tell you not, Alicia, what ere then I sustained ; they speak of the efforts I had to subdue the passion which I knew was a guilty one. Yes, Alicia, I strove to subdue my love ; I was deeply humiliated by it ; but vainly I strove, fruitless were my endeavours, vain and ineffectual my efforts ; for the passion, Alicia, I entertained for you before I was in possession of the fatal secret, had acquired a power over me I was not aware of ; it mingled with every feeling, every sentiment ; whatever I found in creation, that was lovely—whatever was noble or sublime, painted you out to me ; every idea, every praise-worthy action I could perform, still  
seemed

seemed to draw its origin from you ; you inspired—it was you who approved. How vain, then, must prove the attempts to remove you from a heart, whose every sentiment, whose every feeling was your own. Alas ! God and man alike condemned the love I felt. And when I learned at Oakdale, Alicia, you were——Oh ! what shall I call you ?——yes, Alicia, that you were the daughter of Sir Robert Bertram, then was it I resolved to behold you as a sister—to tear the love I had cherished from my heart ; but I found it was interwoven with my very existence ; and, like the fatal present of Dejanira, whilst with frantic hand I strove to cast it from me, it added to my tortures, and I felt that the separation must also be that of soul and body.—For a time I concealed the conflict of the warring passions I sustained—Oft in despair I formed wild and desperate resolutions ; flight, eternal seclusion, presented themselves, yet I had not fortitude to say, for a season I would quit you.—It was, Alicia, a secret flight  
that

that I meditated ;—you knew not that I loved, though once in London I nearly was betrayed into telling you so. Lady Bertram at length, tenderly officious for my happiness, told you that Henry, that her only son, was dying ; that he loved, yet refused to acknowledge the passion to which he was falling a victim. The pain of concealment, and the consciousness that you shared not in all my woes, seemed, by the penance it imparted, to divest my unhallowed love of its guilt, and to sooth my grief ; but when you learned its sad cause, ah ! then I sunk in your esteem, in my own. Can you excuse, can you pardon ?—Oh ! no ; but yet, tell me not, Alicia, you hate the wretched Henry ;—again would he be driven to madness ! I have called upon death ;—the grim tyrant shook his dart at me, then left me for a season.——As I recovered from my illness, I resolved not again to behold you ; I dreaded alike your resentment and your pity ; yet we met, Alicia, and I strove to behold you, as it was fit I should.—Heaven, who knows my heart, who knows how earnestly



nestly I pray for it, yet may empower me to conquer my fatal love! should that be accomplished, I may see, I may again converse with you. My friends talk to me of the gaieties of Paris, where my late melancholy will vanish; whilst others speak in raptures of the pictures, the statues, the fine women of Italy:—Are these to banish you, then, from my heart? Ah! had I been born the child of some humble tenant of the Lords of Malieveren, and had you, my Alicia, been some village maid, whose love I had won—unharassed by the keenness of refined feeling, my nerves would have been braced by labour; I should have toiled for you, Alicia, unheeding of the great world, its vanities, its artificial glosses——But whither do I wander! I meant but to have said, Adieu! I meant but to have said, that I enclosed you a copy of the papers found at Oakdale: Go not, my Alicia, within its horrid chambers; alas! I tremble, as I think a wail may yet linger in your heart to explore them; and Oh! I solemnly  
adjure

adjure you, keep the secret inviolable—wound not the peace of those who have acted a parental character towards you.

“If I die, Alicia (as I think I shall), in a foreign land, you will find yourself entitled to all I can bequeath, though the provision, I doubt not, will be rendered needless. Mr. Meynel, who has no heir, considers you, equally with my parents, as a child. Oh! now adieu, Alicia—perhaps for ever! and sometimes recal the happy days we have passed in each other’s society—Oh! sometimes think of

“HENRY.”

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Alicia laid down what she had read with such painful feelings, and took up the next paper, which retained on it visible marks of the agitation of the writer; it was blotted, and scarcely intelligible, and wrote with still less coherence of style than the preceding one.

“It

“ It is midnight—the last the wretched Henry shall ever spend beneath the paternal roof of his ancestors. This night, then, must not be devoted to oblivion of my woes; it shall be dedicated to remembrance dear to my heart—painfully dear. The night is calm—scarce a breeze rustles the leaves, or dimples the lake, whose waters are dimly beheld by the silver light of the moon as she sinks far beyond them;—the bright star of evening is set; now the moon also vanishes from sight—it sinks behind yon fir-crowned summit, whose top is clearly seen by its light. All is wrapped in darkness and silence; Alicia sleeps—not so Henry, whose passion hearkens not to the voice of Reason, or the mandates of Religion; and who goes, at this dark hour, to revisit the spot consecrated to friendship, where so many happy hours have been spent in the society of Alicia. Alas! since that fatal day, it became the witness of my frantic passions; I have not dared to enter it, lest there I again might behold her who formerly endeared

every scene. I shuddered as I passed along the close embowering walk ; I reached the open ground, and paused as I crossed the bridge;—there oft with Alicia had I wandered. Again I proceeded, and gained the summit of the hill : I entered the building ; my heart palpitated—the hour, the occasion, all contributed to strike an awe. I was about to quit Malieveren for ever ; most probably I should no more behold the scenes of my youthful days, and every trifling, but well-remembered circumstance was recalled to my mind. The kindness of my parents, who, when I was yet a child, allowed my fancy to direct alterations in the grounds, filled my soul with tender grief. Ah ! how fruitless their indulgence ! The trees, which at that time were planted, how will their growth recal—daily recal to those parents, that he, whom they fondly hoped would still, from year to year, have continued to mark their increasing height, who should have dwelt within their shades, was already swept from the earth ! Ah ! vain

were their hopes that he should be the staff of their old age! Heavy, deep will be your afflictions, Oh my parents! You saw not the faults of your son—his foibles you dignified with the name of virtues. Ah, my mother! you, who were the last of the ancient family of Malieveren, who looked, perhaps, too proudly on your child, as the legal representative of a race of heroes, heaven defeats your hopes, my mother;—I sink into an early grave, nor riches nor honours can avail me; they cannot confer happiness, they cannot prolong life.

“Such were the ideas that rose to my mind in sad succession; yet these gave way, and again appeared the image of Alicia to agonize, to upbraid. I paced with unequal and hurried steps the apartment; then, in the spot where madly I had dared to clasp her to my heart, I knelt, and prayed heaven to forgive me, to grant me fortitude, to resist and conquer a passion so fatal to my peace.



Oh! guard Alicia, (I exclaimed), Oh! preserve her from suffering as I have suffered!

“ I became more calm, more collected. As I rose, I saw the morning had dawned; and as I stood viewing each well-remembered scene, I seemed like the first man when about to be excluded from his Eden for disobeying, as he had, its laws;—yet I sunk not again into such despair; a ray of hope seemed to dart on my soul, though I saw not from whence it issued. I took the drawing, in which Alicia had endeavoured to portray the features of her mother, from the frame in which it was placed. It shall accompany me wherever I wander; as I look on it, I shall recal the early lessons of fortitude she taught Alicia, and will strive to emulate her. I shall write, however, on this subject to her, and she will not be offended at what I have done.—I saw the sun rise, for perhaps the last time, from this spot; I gazed with a kind of mingled pleasure and regret as I saw the blushing red

red spread from cloud to cloud, and tinge the summits of the far-distant hills; from behind which hastily rose the glorious lamp of creation, and darted his beams over the late cheerless world; the dark walls of Malieveren reflected them, and its numerous windows glittered with the bright rays; yet they seemed to cast a sickly splendour, and, like funereal torches, to shew but departed happiness. I turned my aching sight from beholding it, and descending the hill, again passed along the gloomy walk, and entering the castle, silently stole to my chamber; and thus has Henry passed the last night at the Castle of Malieveren. I was chill with the damp air—I was ill; I am still so. Yet I have to seal the packet in which I have bid adieu to Alicia, and in which I have enclosed the fatal mystery I learnt at Oakdale.

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CHAPTER VIII.

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**A**LICIA wondered why Henry had enclosed this paper, that had evidently been written with no design of her perusing it, but supposed it had been done by mistake, of which she was afterwards assured, by not finding the request regarding the picture, which he doubtless intended to have made, from what was said in the paper she had just read.

Alicia next, with trembling hand, unfolded an envelope to several distinct sheets,

6 sheets, which were folded and numbered by Mr. Bertram ; the writing on the cover was also his, and began as follows:—

“ To you, Alicia, I commit the enclosed, but do not too severely blame me for anticipating you in the fatal secret ;—already you are informed how I acquired the knowledge of entering the concealed chambers ; you also, Alicia, know what urged me to visit them. Lord Morville and I quitted Malieveren together, in order, as you may recollect, to spend a week at York. Thither we went ; I staid two days ; then informed his Lordship that I had an affair upon my hands which required precaution and secrecy ; that if he would promise to conceal my absence at our return home, I would leave him at York for two or three days, and again joining him there, by our returning to Malieveren together, no suspicion could be incurred. Morville, in his gay way, consented to my plan, and at night, in disguise, I quitted York, and left the chaise a few miles from Oakdale ; walk-

ing forward till I came to an hedge alchouse, whose sign was the arms of the Bertrams, I stopped for refreshment, and pretending to have passed the hall, enquired concerning it and its owners. The idle tales I heard are not worth repeating.—Towards evening I quitted this house, and reached Oakdale, when twilight shrouded its grey walls. I had with me a rope-ladder, with crooks for fastening it to the wall, by which means I found entrance at a window in the second story, which I easily opened; I drew in my ladder, and struck a light, when I discovered I was in Sir Philip's apartment. Ah! Alicia, need I picture to you the blood-stained chamber—the bed, whose curtains yet remained closed—the knife—the scull—sad accompaniments! Alas! as I think, my soul sickens, my heart recoils—ideas will intrude—I banish them—I imagine myself a parricide for entertaining them; yet, perforce, again they are presented;—horror! horror! my brain turns round! I say, Alicia, it cannot be!—no, it is impossible! —every



—every word, every action of his life forbids the supposition;—no, Alicia, Sir Robert could never consent to such deeds, would never delegate authority to any one capable of such crimes; and yet——Oh, Alicia!——but read, and yourself judge.

“I opened the chest, I took out the papers it contained;—I was overpowered by surprise and horror—I sat for hours motionless—my light was extinguished—all around me was dark; yet still I sat meditating on the papers I had read, till day broke through the narrow chinks. I then resolved to explore my way back to Sir Philip’s apartment, in order to procure a fresh light. I had descended several steps, and nearly reached, as I supposed, the door of the bloody chamber, when my foot slipped, and I fell with a violence that for some time deprived me of sense or recollection. Recovering from my fall, I felt much bruised; I was, I found, in a spot where no ray of light reached me; I was, Alicia, in a dismal dungeon, for such I imagined

G 5

gined enclosed me. Murder here had been committed, and I felt as if sent to be offered a victim on the altar of retributive justice. Shall I attempt at description of the horrid forms I encountered ; shall I speak of the terrors that assailed me ; shall I talk of the long winding passages I traversed ?—no, Alicia, I speak not of these, for ideal horrors might be presented amidst the darkness that surrounded me ; and sure also the fall, which was from a considerable height, might likewise have contributed to what was a temporary derangement. I sometimes think that my senses were deranged ; yet surely there exist amidst these gloomy cells some frightful *realities*. Go not, then, I conjure you, to Oakdale—venture not, my Alicia, to its horrid chambers.—Alas ! I tremble alike for your reason and your life.

“ An entire day and night were thus spent amidst horror, desolation, and death ;—at length, after various attempts to escape, I  
found

found myself in the blood-stained chamber, and saw the apartment beyond it through the divided partition. Nature yet I think would have sunk under what I had recently suffered, had I not taken care to bring some refreshment with me, which I left in Sir Philip's chamber. Recruited by it, I sat down, and copied the papers I had found, as well as their mutilated state would allow; after which, restoring them from whence they were taken, I quitted the hall, and met at York Lord Morville, with whom you may remember I returned to Malieveren. I have enclosed the copies I took—Alas! I have no right to conceal the sad record of crimes, although at times I have meditated doing so. The paper No. 1. had been written with ink, that has faded till scarcely intelligible; you will see I have marked the parts, which were wholly illegible.

## No. I.

*To Alicia, the Daughter of Eliza and Robert Bertram, of Oakdale, B \* \* \**

“ To you, my child, my beloved Alicia, does thy sad mother write, yet in hopes future time may unfold to you your birth, which, alas ! I am not permitted to do. Have you yet, Alicia, the tokens I gave; they will testify \* \* \* \* \*

\* \* \* \* \*

you, my Alic \* \* \* \* \*

you are an orphan;—it is false; it is the cruel deliberate malice of Sir Robert Bertram;—yes, he, from whom you draw your being, the Baronet of Oakdale, imprisons me, where I ought to preside; it is he too who has torn me from my child, althou \* \*

he is \* \* \* \* \* father; yet Sir Robert would not be thus cruel, was he not instigated by a love of wealth, by a desire of \* \* \* For this he forsook his \* \* \*

for this he married the rich heiress of

M

M \* \* \* \* It was a false, a deluding ambition that makes me thus unacknowledged, *that makes you disowned by Sir Robert.* Mark what I inform you of, Alicia; you are the legal heir of Sir Robert Bertram; his son, who is considered as such, may, to be sure, inherit the fortune of his mother, but the lands of Bertram, of Oakdale, you may prove your claim to. But why do I say this! Alas! Alicia, you have an enemy, equally your's and mine, who may never suffer you to behold this \* \*

\* \* \* \* \* Ah! why, Sir Robert, did you listen to the suggestions of this fiend in human shape, who spurred you on to forsake your once beloved \* \* \*

The life of Sir Robert Bertram seems to give the lie to my assertions; his well-known integrity, his uprightness—Ah! what chance, unless he relents towards us, my Alicia, what chance remains of contending my rights and your's with Lady Bertram and her son; yet there are certain proofs of my marriage, of your birth \* \*

\* \*



\* \* \* \* \* Ah! Alicia, never, I  
 fear, will you be pressed to a father's bosom  
 —never must you hope to bear the name of  
 Bertram; you must live an alien, an outcast,  
 and the name of Bouchier alone will, dis-  
 tinguish you \* \* \* \* \*

\* \* \* \* \*  
 \* \* \* \* \*  
 \* \* \* \* \*  
 \* \* \* \* \*

I have nothing to bequeath you, my child,  
 save the picture of your father, drawn by  
 myself; the likeness is a striking one \* \*

\* \* \* \* \*

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No. 2.

“ Alicia, I am dying—murdered; Sir Ro-  
 bert Bertram, thou hast done this \* \* \*

\* \* \* \* \* What crimes, what com-  
 plicated crimes, have these gloomy and con-  
 cealed dungeons witnessed?—murder is  
 familiar here \* \* \* \* \*

Sure the vengeance of heaven will fall heavy  
 on thee \* \* \* \* \* thou hast  
 instigated, thou—yes, thou, whom I solely  
 confided

confided in—yes, thou, more than Sir Robert, hast caused the woes I have sustained. Once he melted, once he promised to own his child; but thou stepped forward, thou intercepted, thou imprisoned—it is thou, then, rather than Sir Robert, I should accuse.—No, Sir Robert knows not what his child, what I have sustained \* \* \* \*

The wrath of the Almighty will fall heavy on the whole race. My life ebbs, but my mind yet is firm. Surely I feel a kind of prophetic spirit seize me! Child after child shall be mourned, yet my Alicia shall live, yet shall she avenge my fate, whilst death stalking abroad, shall crush the pampered heir of Sir Robert \* \* \* \*

\* \* \* \*

“ If the spirits of the injured are, as I have been told, suffered to revisit the scenes they occupied when on earth, sure the sad Eliza will \* \* \* sure she will on earth fly in shadowy forms before the accused \* \*

\* \* \* By night will she hover round the pillow, and pale, wan, ghastly, fright with

with horrid menaces \* \* \* \* \*  
 and gliding through the gloomy chambers  
 of Oakdale \* \* \* \* \*  
 \* \* \* \* \*

“ These lines, my Alicia, are written with  
 blood; look on them, nor start, as I tell thee  
 it is the blood that ebbs from the heart of  
 thy dying mother; it calls aloud to heaven  
 for that vengeance that is deferred but a  
 while. Still my soul sinks not—it bends  
 not beneath oppression \* \* \* \* \*  
 \* \* \* \* \*

“ Adieu! Oh! for ever adieu! till be-  
 yond the grave, Alicia, thou again beholdest  
 thy mother.

“ ELIZA BERTRAM.”

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No. 3.

*Mr. Bertram to Alicia.*

“ How, Alicia, shall the son of Sir Ro-  
 bert Bertram dare to comment on those  
 3 papers?

papers? True, Alicia, his father's life gives the lie to the bold assertions they contain; his well-known integrity, his uprightness, are even in them acknowledged. Oh! say, then, is it possible that, urged by a desire of riches, prompted by ambition, he could be led to forsake a wife, to imprison her in these gloomy chambers, that he might marry the amiable, the wealthy heiress of Malieveren? Can two souls exist in one body? Can one lead to the basest actions, and shall the other be capable of performing deeds the most praise-worthy, the most noble? If this be admitted, Alicia, the whole is plain—the Baronet of Oakdale imprisoned your mother, and afterwards art of some kind was used to persuade you of her death. You too, Alicia, must have been born after his second marriage; yet you, the only offspring of the former, are the heir of his estates. Oh! is it Henry Bertram that writes this—is it then his father he dares to suspect of such complicated crimes? Surely, Alicia, the whole is a fabrication, a vile, a base contrivance, to  
ruin

ruin my peace, and Sir Robert's fair fame. Already do you know he has an enemy—a powerful, a dangerous enemy; already do you know, that the villain to whom I allude is capable of every art, of every diabolical action. I have endeavoured to trace the whole to him; I have supposed it was the infernal M'Rae himself, who one night, by leave of Jackson, the Oakdale steward, slept at the hall; that he had found means to enter the concealed chambers—that he had carried off the real papers left there by your mother—that he had substituted those I found in their stead; yet, Alicia, this is but a vague suggestion, made by a hope that vain would flatter me with more cheerful prospects. Alas! too well am I convinced the secret, known to so few, could never come to the knowledge of M'Rae;—your change of name, the caution which was observed towards you, even respecting your letters, whilst it proved a mystery was attached to your birth, also must have prevented M'Rae tracing the daughter of Sir Robert



Robert Bertram in Miss Sleigh. You always was conscious of being allied to or descended from the Bertrams; your mother was aware the secret was too weighty for your tender years. You doubtless have not forgotten Sir Robert's haste in quitting Oakdale; you may also remember the evident agitation he sustained at Acorn Bank, whilst it was the subject of conversation with Mr. Heavyside; and the determined and positive declaration the Baronet made against pulling it down. I have, Alicia, meditated at times, asking of Sir Robert an explanation; yet how can I do this? Alas! should it be true, what remains of happiness are left to him, must for ever be destroyed; if false, how can he again bear the sight of a child who dared suspect such a parent, so tenderly overlooking, as he does, my faults. Is it then I, Alicia, that shall hold up the glass, and bid him behold the horrid crimes that are reflected from the gloomy chambers of Oakdale?—No, I cannot, nor would your gentle nature wish I should thus inflict

inflict such torture, thus drive daggers to a parent's heart. You, I well know, will not wish by law to prove and assert your claims, of which, indeed, there appears little chance of succeeding in, as no mention is made (at least none such is legible) in the papers I found, where the proofs or witnesses are to be met with, to justify any claim being made on any positive accusation; but I have, Alicia, committed to your care a packet, sealed and addressed to my father, in which are copies of those papers, with a full account of the concealed chambers, and all I knew regarding them. If then you should hereafter receive more certain confirmation of the authenticity of the sad tale these papers contain, or if at any future period you should judge it proper to reveal yourself to Sir Robert, then give him, when the writer of this has ceased to exist, then give to my father the last sad, the cruel legacy of his son; do it not though, my Alicia, unless forced by circumstances which must bring on some explanation. Ill would  
it

it become me to raise your arm against him who gave us—Oh! yes, gave existence to both; for then, in that packet, would Sir Robert learn the sad variety of pain I have felt on a subject that has brought me to the brink of the grave.

“Perhaps, Alicia, my mind has weakened with my body; or it may be, that the horrid night I passed in the dungeons of Oakdale, has left an impression on my brain. I used not to be subject to such weaknesses; I never laboured under superstitious ideas till of late, and now in vain I strive to combat them. I think my doom was foretold, that I am the selected victim; that the fatal passion which consumes me was ordained for me to sustain; that, through me, shall Sir Robert be punished by the disappointment of his fondest hopes.

“Is it then, Alicia, true, as has been asserted, that as the period approaches, when the soul and its earthly mansion are about to  
be

be separated, that the immortal spirit is suffered to expand itself, to look beyond its present state, and to speak of the future? So thought Eliza when she wrote in a prophetic strain, and denounced vengeance. 'Alicia (says she) shall live—she shall avenge my fate, whilst death stalking abroad, shall crush the pampered heir of Sir Robert.'—Ah! Alicia, is this not fulfilled, or at least near its completion? Unintentionally have you been, all gentle as you are, the instrument of vengeance.

“ The pale and ghastly form seen by you and Mary, you, Alicia, would not easily yield your belief of; you would not have suffered merely under ideal terrors.—‘ Pale (says the bloody scroll) wan—ghastly—gliding through the gloomy chambers of Oakdale—fright with horrid menaces.’—Alas! Alicia, why do I raise such suggestions to you? why wish to impart to you the doubts which, in my late weak and debilitated state, have sunk on my mind! I did formerly believe the laws

laws of nature were fixed, that the Almighty Creator had made them immutable as his power; but the horrid scenes I beheld sunk on my soul. Ah! a fatal chain of circumstances concur—they are linked with Alicia in mystery which I yet want fortitude to unravel. But what more would I learn regarding your birth; the portrait, Alicia, too fully proves—yes, it too surely confirms that you are the daughter of the Baronet of Oakdale; it is, indeed, as Eliza affirms, a striking likeness of Sir Robert Bertram, though taken, as its youthful air declares, some years ago—previous, indeed, I should suppose, to your birth. But I must lay down my pen, however painful the subject: yet it is to Alicia I write, and I forget the length of my paper. Ah! Alicia, all, every thing but you, at times are forgotten by

“HENRY.”

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After having finished the perusal of these papers, Alicia sat a considerable time absorbed



bed in horrid astonishment, without seeking to investigate the probability of the story. Her senses seemed bewildered by terror and amazement ; she felt herself seized by a kind of stupor that allowed not of reflection, and which, for a season, chained up every faculty. In this state of mortal suspension, she threw herself, towards day-break, upon the bed, and fell into a sound and heavy sleep, nor awoke till so much beyond her usual hour, as to alarm Mrs. Rowley, who was left at Malieveren with all the servants, whom Sir Robert neither chose to take abroad, nor to discharge.

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CHAPTER IX.  

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ALICIA, when she arose in the morning, had a more clear comprehension of what she had read; but her head felt light, as if she had not slept. Yet she offered not again to unfold the packet; no tear fell, nor did her countenance wear the expression of acute feeling; it was a deep cloud of stupid grief, that seemed to threaten an annihilation of her senses. Mrs. Rowley had watched with an anxious eye the change of her beloved Lady, and proposed to her, as the evening was fine, she should ride out. This,

however, Alicia refused ; “ but,” said she, “ Mrs. Rowley, I shall walk out—the air may be of use—my head burns.”

Slowly Alicia took, as it were instinctively, the gloomy path, along which Henry had lately gone to their favourite building ; she trembled as her hand rested on the door he had closed, and perhaps would never again open it. On the table lay the frame, from which he had taken the drawing that contained the portrait of her mother. Every object recalled most painfully the assiduous friendship, the love of Mr. Bertram ; the softened recollection brought those tears that had been dried up by horror and amazement. A little calmed after this effusion of tenderness, Alicia again unfolded the packet, and read the papers it contained with more composure than she had the preceding evening been able to do. She was assured Henry had found these papers where she had been informed by her mother the story of her birth was placed ; yet those writings  
breathed

breathed a different spirit from what she imagined her mother possessed ; they seemed the effusions of a proud and high-spirited woman, who bent not under oppression, but whose undaunted mind, even when dying, seemed to breathe a spirit of revenge, that vented itself in imprecations of future vengeance. Her mother, from all she could recollect concerning her, was gentleness itself ; never did Alicia remember to have heard one impatient expression escape her ; never heard her beloved parent reproach any one creature as the cause of her sufferings, but appeared to look beyond the grave for that happiness which for her was fled this world. “ Sure,” exclaimed Alicia, if a perfect model for piety and resignation existed on earth, it was my fainted mother. These papers (laying them on the table) talk of revenge ; they display the writings of a heart, whose feelings, whose passions were uncontrollable ;—no, (said Alicia, pushing them from her), these were not my mother’s sentiments—these cannot be her writing—

she bade me forgive my enemies, and to walk uprightly and humbly before God ; yes, such were the first lessons my infant mind received. Yet (thought Alicia) who could fabricate such a tale ? No one but Mr. Kirby and myself were in possession of the secret !”

As Alicia revolved the whole story in her own mind, it seemed, the longer she thought of it, to grow the more mysterious ; for she knew not many particulars regarding her parents. Sir Robert had said who were the parents of Mrs. Bouchier ? He had spoken of Mr. Bouchier, who had lived one entire year at Oakdale. Sir Robert and Mr. Bouchier could never be the same persons, although Mr. Bouchier had lived so retired as seldom to be seen ; yet sure, in the very midst of his own estate, surrounded by his tenants and dependants, he must have been known. Alicia thought Sir Robert’s conversation when in their journey from Bertram Castle to Oakdale ; he had spoken of her  
mother,



mother, of Mr. Kirby; he had spoken too of Mr. Bouchier; he appeared to be interested for Mrs. Bouchier's fate, and that of her child, and blamed the advisers of the match with a person so totally unknown as was Mr. Bouchier, of whom Sir Robert spoke as a suspicious, an abandoned character. The Baronet said he had lately been informed of the particulars he related, and his manner confirmed it. If, then, those papers were not a fabrication, Sir Robert possessed an artful duplicity of conduct, that completely evaded suspicion; for he was uncommonly frank, rather blunt and plain than wearing any air of reserve. One thing seemed to confirm the strange tale she had read—the very strange resemblance Sir Robert, though not now by any means a young man, bore to the pictures of the handsome youth she had seen in the concealed chamber; a resemblance that was the cause of the agitation Alicia sustained, my readers may recollect, when first introduced to Sir Robert at Acorn-bank. Alicia also remembered Mr. Kirby's once saying she

had a better right to the name of Bertram than she had to that of Bouchier; and that, if she had what was her right, it would not be in any one's power to turn her out of Oakdale Hall. This speech of Mr. Kirby's had oft before this given much uneasiness to our heroine, and it has already been alluded to by me. Yet these circumstances, nor the papers joined to them, could fully convince Alicia that she was the daughter of Sir Robert Bertram, whose kindness to her dwelt on her soul, whilst her reason revolted at the idea of connecting this horrid tale of guilt with the other parts of a character eminent for the upright discharge of every public, every relative and social duty. The heart of Alicia too had now ceased to think of Henry as a brother, and refused his idea admittance in that view. The longer Alicia thought of this mysterious affair, the more it perplexed her; and she resolved to go the following day to Oakdale, notwithstanding all its terrors, and the injunctions of Henry. True, as she thought of these terrors, she shrunk; but it was become  
absolutely

absolutely necessary, that it should no longer be deferred.

The next morning Alicia was unable to sit up, much less take her purposed journey; she had caught a severe cold, that brought on her a degree of fever, which was heightened by the agitation she had sustained. This confined her chiefly to her bed during the period of Lady Morville's absence from Malton, who, returning at the end of a fortnight, found her friend just able to quit her chamber. Her Ladyship came home in high spirits; she was certain Henry would soon return to England, quite strong and healthy as he was formerly; he had embarked with a fair wind for France, and was much better than at the time he quitted Malieveren. Alicia was soon able to go to Malton, of which Lady Morville declared herself weary, and proposed, although autumn was nearly at an end, as the weather was yet very fine, they should go to Scarborough; she was certain bathing would be of infinite use to Alicia, who declined

at first accompanying her Ladyship, saying she greatly wished to visit a Lady in Scotland lately arrived from the West-Indies, and who had been a friend of her mother's. Alicia strongly indeed desired to see Mrs. Dalrymple, though it was a subordinate wish to that of visiting Oakdale; but Lady Morville would not listen to any such proposal. "Do you not know, Alicia," said she gaily, "Lady Bertram committed you to my care? I promised nothing should take you from me, so only be a very good girl, and do what such a sage matron as I am, sees fit for your benefit; and next summer, Alicia, we will try to persuade Morville to take us a tour into the Highlands. Do you not remember, when we spent that single day at Edinburgh, how I teased Sir Robert to take us all down into Scotland the next summer? Oh! I should like it infinitely—so pray defer your visit to this Creolian friend of your's——Is she not a Creolian?"

"I believe not," said Alicia.

"Well now, do not, my sweet girl, think of leaving me—it would be so cruel."

Alicia

Alicia replied, still intimating her desire to go immediately; and Lady Morville then said she would also go. This proposal, as it defeated her plans, was rejected by Alicia, under the excuse of the roads in Scotland being broke up; and she resolved to defer her visit once again to Oakdale, and accompany her Ladyship to Scarborough, whom she found was positively determined not to go without her from Malton Park.

The fineness of the season prolonged the stay of Lord and Lady Morville at Scarborough till October was considerably advanced, from whence they went, still accompanied by Alicia, to a small house of the Viscount's in Berkshire, which had, when his marriage was at first talked of at Malieveren, been agreed to have been settled upon his Lady; but as they chose to manage their wedding their own way, the Earl and Baronet determined no fortune should be given, or jointure made, till it was seen how this couple conducted themselves. Letters had

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been



been received at Malton from Sir Robert, giving an account of their having arrived safely on the other side of the water; and at Scarborough again, both Lady Morville and Alicia had letters from Lady Bertram, dated Paris, which spoke of Henry's having borne his journey better than was expected. Before they quitted Berkshire, they learned he was considerably more cheerful, and was able to bear travelling as fast as it was judged necessary: they were then at Montargis, and meant to proceed through Orleanois, keeping nearly the course of the Loire; and as Sir Robert thought the season too late for crossing the Alps into Italy, at present they purposed spending the winter in Languedoc.

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CHAPTER X.  

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LADY Morville now declared her intention of spending Christmas at Acorn-bank—all Sir Robert's houses being open for her reception during the absence of their owner. Thither, then, the gay Viscount and Viscountess, with Alicia, removed, and Acorn-bank, for about a fortnight, was crowded by gay women of quality, and fashionable loungers of various descriptions, one set giving way to another during the period of her Ladyship's residence there. They reached London in time for the lovely Vis-

H 6 countess.

countess to be presented on her marriage at the Queen's birth-day. The Earl of Knafborough and Lady Augusta were in London before the Morville's, as also were the Marquis and Marchioness of Felton, who had been received into favour with the Duke, as her Grace had expected, upon Mr. Ross being styled Sir James. The charming Marchioness had, upon this reconciliation, been introduced at Court, and made her appearance with much eclat on the birth-day. Her elegance and beauty were the general topic of conversation, with the gracious manner she was spoke of by an exalted personage, who was pleased to say the Marquis of Felton had displayed his taste in beauty by his choice and his sound judgment of merit; for the lovely Marchioness was an ornament to the high rank he had raised her to, and that she would, from her amiable disposition and her virtue, prove an example worthy of imitation to the brilliant circle in which she moved. The Duke no longer appeared to think her  
alliance

alliance beneath him ; but, by his kindness and attention, seemed to wish to obliterate all former disagreeable remembrances from the mind of his engaging daughter-in-law, who experienced from the Dutchess all the tenderness of a parent, and paid her in return all the affection, all the duty of a child.

Alicia most truly rejoiced in the Marchioness thus triumphing over the prejudices of the Duke, and her being as firmly established in his good graces as in the affections of the Dutchess. Alicia's only truly happy hours were spent in the society of Lady Augusta Morville or the Marchioness ; but few were the hours she could thus spend ; few indeed were the moments allowed her for reflection, for Lady Morville blazed forth one of the finest stars in the world of fashion, and every minute of her life was occupied in keeping up the character she had attained. The gay pursuit of pleasure her Ladyship had engaged in with so much activity

activity, Alicia would in part have avoided ; but the attempt she first made was so unsuccessful, that she found whatever career the gay Viscountess chose to run, she must either accompany or be subjected to a quarrel of a most unpleasant kind. Ill-suited indeed at present was the mind of our heroine to the light trifling of fashionable conversation, or to the gay and splendid scenes that were exhibited to her, whose heart acknowledged but one model of perfection, over whose sorrows it would have mourned in solitude. Alicia's ideas presented to her, amidst the brilliant circles in which she moved, Henry sick, languishing, dying ; the strange mystery of her birth, and the gloomy chambers of Oakdale. Nearly had our heroine sunk beneath her feelings ; but exerting her resolution and fortitude, she declared war upon herself, and checked the gloomy visions that haunted her sleeping and waking. Alicia found her exertions rewarded ;—though she kept not pace with the lively fallies of her volatile friend,



friend, she no longer was remarked in public for the air of pensiveness which had, at her first return to town, distinguished her. Alicia sometimes supposed Lady Morville felt a transitory regret, as she heard of the elegant presents of jewels the Marchioness of Felton had lavished on her by the Duke of Wakefield; nor as the Viscountess listened to the predictions of his Grace's short life, and the high rank the Marchioness would shortly fill, could she at all times suppress her envy at her good fortune, or mortification at the precedence which she had already obtained over her? The house of the Marquis had been furnished with great elegance by the Duke's orders at the time of his reconciliation to the match of his son with Miss Ross; and all the polite world were enraptured equally with the charming Marchioness, and the magnificent suite of rooms which, in the last week of January, were opened for their reception, when the Marchioness gave her first route. Alicia was deeply concerned to see Lady Morville was completely out of  
humour

humour with listening to the justly-deserved praises of the taste and elegance of the Marchioness;—a ball was given the same evening by the Dutchess of Wakefield. In driving from the Marquis's to St. James's Square, her Ladyship sat in silence; but Alicia soon heard her, when in the rooms, very eloquently descanting on the want of taste displayed in the apartments she had recently quitted. "Magnificent! Lord George," said Lady Morville, "pray what is it you can call magnificent? Oh la! yes, the gilding; the Duke is determined his daughter-in-law shall not want that now."

"If your Ladyship will not grant them magnificent with such costly ornaments, what do you term them?"

"Oh! the longest room is quite awful; for, as I looked up to the dome, I supposed I had got into St. Paul's."

"No bad idea, upon my honour," exclaimed the Earl of Ashford; "though had your Ladyship compared it to the inside of the pantheon, and yourself to one of the presiding

presiding divinities, it would have made a more applicable allusion."

To this speech Lady Morville replied, and another remark was made regarding the height of the dome; the chandeliers were too heavy, the lights ill dispersed.

This critique upon taste and magnificence was, however, interrupted by the Marquis, who solicited the hand of Lady Morville for the first dance; and by this mark of distinction, expunged for the present from her memory the bad taste and gilding of his apartments. Alicia was introduced to the Earl of Trewarne by Lord William Botereaux: she was much pleased with the Earl, to whom she was till then a stranger;—he appeared upwards of forty; his manners and address were those of the finished gentleman, yet partook of that insinuating softness which wins upon the heart before you are aware, blended with a manly dignity; he danced with infinite  
grace;

grace; and at the conclusion of the second dance, Alicia declared to Lord Castle Mawn, who solicited her hand for the following one, that she meant to sit out. Lord Trewarne seating himself by her, entered into conversation—drawing a lively, though good-humoured, picture of the follies of those around him;—glaring vices he lashed with the severest satire, and as lavishly praised the virtues of others. Then changing the subject, his Lordship said he did not recollect having had the pleasure of meeting her before; “but (continued he) I have only lately come to town, and do not go much into public myself. I love the society of my friends; I love rational conversation; but, in the large circles of gaiety and dissipation, you meet with neither. Last winter I spent one month only in the metropolis; the rest was passed with a few chosen friends in retirement; for the deep, the heavy affliction I have undergone, though years have since rolled over, renders me, when the remembrance rises to my mind, unfit  
for

for mixing in the gay world." Those scenes, those deep afflictions, now seemed to rise to his Lordship's mind ; for, drawing his handkerchief over his face, he hastily bowed to Alicia, and withdrew. She felt for the Earl, sympathized with the deep and interesting sensibility of soul he possessed, so very rare to be met with at his apparent age. " Ah! (thought Alicia) he surely has deserved, though he possesses not, happiness ; the mind of this nobleman appears an enlarged one, and his acquirements to have kept pace with his natural endowments."—These reflections were broke in upon by the Earl of Knafborough advancing to enquire of our heroine for Lady Augusta, who quitting the set with whom she was about to dance, instantly left the rooms.

Early the next day, the Earl of Knafborough called at Lord Morville's to take his leave, saying, business of infinite importance called him into France, where he yet did not know how long he might remain, but  
should



should doubtless see Sir Robert Bertram and his family before he returned. The Earl took an affectionate adieu of Lord and Lady Morville, not omitting at the same time some prudent cautions regarding their future conduct, but gave not the slightest hint of his business upon the Continent ; only saying he would write from Paris, to which place their letters were to be addressed. Lady Augusta was to reside at first with the Countess of Wolverhampton ; and after a visit of a month, or some such time, she was to stay at Lord Morville's till the Earl returned

CHAPTER.

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CHAPTER XI.

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LADY Morville, who passed so severe a critique upon the Marquis of Felton's elegant suite of rooms, began the morning after the Earl's departure a very eloquent harangue ; in which she shewed no more partiality to her own apartments.

“ Well, Lady Morville,” said his Lordship, who was lolling in an indolent posture over the breakfast-table, “ had we at Malieveren known our mind about marrying, the Earl intended to have new laid out the  
house

house whenever a lady came to preside in it."

"Then why, my Lord, was it not done before we came to town? I had no idea of the frightful appearance the furniture and decorations make."

"Upon my honour," said his Lordship, "I believe we shall go fast enough to the devil without making alterations where none are needed; the house was only furnished against I came of age."

"That is two seasons ago at least."

Lady Morville now gave orders to a footman to go to Monsieur Villeneuve, and desire him to attend her.

"Are you then determined," said Lord Morville, with infinite *sang froid*, to forget the prudent cautions given us yesterday by the Earl?"

"My dear Lord, do you know I dreamt all last night of such an elegant suite of apartments! "Oh! I shall die if Monsieur Villeneuve

Villeneuve cannot produce a plan that will equal my——”

“ Good morning,” said his Lordship ; “ we shall meet, I suppose, at dinner in Hanover-Square ;—am I not right ? do we not dine with Ashford to-day ? ”

Her Ladyship set her Lord right as to the article of dining, and he humming a new opera tune, quitted the room.

“ Oh ! my dear Alicia,” said Lady Morville, “ what a charming taste this Villeneuve has ! He planned out the Marchioness’s rooms in a far more brilliant stile than they were finished in ; it was all the Dutchess’s fault, or they would have been done according to Villeneuve’s first plan ; but she said the sum was sufficient to build an hospital—was it not an odd idea of her Grace ?—and so she would have them all her own way.”

Lady Morville was now informed Monsieur Villeneuve would honour himself by waiting  
upon

upon her Ladyship the next day ; but he was so engaged for that, it was impossible.

The following day the plans were laid before her Ladyship ; to which very important subject all other engagements gave way. At length a design was fixed upon, that, in brilliancy and eccentricity of taste, Lady Morville flattered herself would far exceed the apartments of the rival Marchioness ; for so now was she deemed. Expence was never once thought of by her Ladyship ; and she doubted not, if this plan was carried into execution, of giving the ton for the remainder of the season ; but as Lord Morville cast his eyes upon the figures, which contained the aggregate of the estimate made by Monsieur Villeneuve, after having consulted the different tradesmen to be employed on this occasion, his Lordship declared his surprise at the sum, by saying he did not believe the house itself, and all the present furniture, had cost so much.



much. "The plan must be," said his Lordship, "reconsidered."

Her Ladyship did command herself, though as yet unacquainted with control, till this elegant fancy-monger took his departure, when her expostulations were pretty loud; but his Lordship, who had been roused from his usual heedlessness by the enormous expence, declared positively nothing should be done; yet still Lady Morville persisted.—"Were the Earl of Knafborough's estates equal to the Duke of Wakefield's, then such extravagance would be censurable: the Marchioness of Felton would not desire such a proof of folly from the Marquis; but she is a reasonable woman."

Her Ladyship's rage was now kindled; her smothered envy broke out, and Alicia was deeply concerned to find her friend, the once gentle, yet lively Mary, could so far be carried away by the tide of vanity, as

to allow it to rouse passions which till then appeared not to have existence in her heart.

“Miss Sleigh,” said Lord Morville, rising, “to you I refer myself;—her Ladyship cannot now hearken; but you are in possession of your reason, and know that till now I have never opposed Lady Morville’s wishes; and yet, I am agreeable to lay out half the sum mentioned by Villeneuve; and that I am certain Sir Robert and Lady Bertram, equally with the Earl, would censure, as beyond—greatly indeed, Miss Sleigh, beyond the limits of my income. I may be deceived, and I may be ruined, but I am not yet so blind as to run headlong with her Ladyship to destruction.

Tears had succeeded to Lady Morville’s phillipic on this occasion; but his Lordship remained perfectly undisturbed, and quitted the house, nor returned till a late hour in the morning.

Alicia

Alicia was happy to find Lord Morville had at least more prudence than his Lady, at whose conduct she was sincerely grieved. "Alas!" thought Alicia, "I ought to pity rather than censure; Lady Morville scarce understands the value of money. Accustomed to affluence, to indulgence, she has no idea of the bounds of either; she thinks not of expence;—by lessening the former, limits should be prescribed to the latter; and this fracas forebodes many."

Such were the reflections of Alicia whilst seated by Lady Morville; nor did she attempt in the least to interrupt the fit of tears in which she was left by her Lord. Her Ladyship grew more composed, and then broke out into lamentations of her own hard fate. Ah! why was she so hasty in her choice? Ah! why did she quit her parents' roof? To these *pathetic* ejaculations, Alicia made such kind of temporizing replies as were best suited to compose the spirits of her friend, without yielding too

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much

much to her opinion.—Again the plan of Monsieur Villeneuve was talked of, and Alicia said she thought that her Ladyship had fixed upon would, when executed, appear too much like a copy from the Marchioness's apartments, which she did not think either light or elegant. By degrees Alicia thus brought her Ladyship to listen to her Lord's proposal, and meet him the next day with her usual good humour and vivacity.

The prudence of our heroine having adjusted what had borne a serious aspect for destroying the future comfort of her friends, she next found employment for that virtue in altering the expensive plan which Lady Morville had fixed upon. The fine taste of Alicia has been already mentioned, and the extravagant and costly decorations of Monsieur Villeneuve were changed by it for the simple and the elegant. Again this fanciful director of splendour attended her Ladyship, and assured her that this plan  
would

would come within the sum fixed, whilst its novelty would at once surprise and charm.

The next day the house resounded with the noise of the workmen employed, and Lady Morville insisted all should be finished that day six weeks ; and informed her Lord and Alicia, on that day they should be opened by a ball ; for which purpose cards were immediately sent to all the fashionable world that at this season were in the gay metropolis.

Whilst the alterations were making in the house of Lord Morville, the family removed to Sir Robert Bertram's, in Cavendish Square ; and during the time the workmen were busily employed, day and night, in what her Ladyship had set her whole heart upon having accomplished. She ran on in her usual gay habits. Letters arrived from the Earl of Knaresborough, who had reached Paris ; but they spoke not to Lord Morville of what had caused the Earl's sudden journey.



ney. Alicia supposed it was known to Lady Augusta, as she appeared unusually serious, and had waited with evident anxiety and impatience for letters from her father. Mr. Meynel was yet in town, but Alicia had seen him less frequently than she wished, from her being constantly engaged: he talked of going shortly to Elmwood, his seat in Devonshire, as he imagined the air of the metropolis did not agree with him. The daughters of Mrs. Dalrymple had made a stay of a fortnight with this worthy old gentleman, before they were conducted by Alicia to the school fixed upon by her, which was with the successors of Mrs. Selden, at Clapham.

The Earl of Trewarne, to whom Alicia had been introduced at the ball given by the Dutchess of Wakefield, had assiduously attached himself to her ever since: in his elegant and refined conversation our heroine felt a sensible pleasure. This apparent attachment of the Earl had afforded a charming

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ing opportunity to Lady Morville to rally her friend. "It will indeed," sometimes she would say, "be very ill-natured of you to marry the Earl of Trewarne, when you know, Alicia, you might have had the honour of being my mother-in-law; and I dare say this favourite of your's is not above some ten years younger than my Lord's father." At other times she would gaily counsel Alicia to accept the Earl, whose immense estates, she had been told, were free of all incumbrances. "Oh! how I shall envy you the jointure that will be made; and, Alicia, a Countess must take precedence of such people as Lady Morville." Then again would she urge her to comply with the wishes of the Earl;—every body was charmed with him; Oh! she would be so envied! it would be so charming to see the disappointment and mortification it must cause.

Alicia sometimes would reply in the same gay stile to her friend; at others, seriously

assure her the Earl of Trewarne had given her no cause to suspect he ever intended her the honour of becoming his wife ; an honour which, if she knew her own heart, she certainly, if offered, would decline ; although, she confessed, notwithstanding his Lordship's age, she had seen few, very few men she thought so amiable, or so pleasingly interesting.

Lady Augusta and Alicia now seldom met, as the Dowager Countess of Wolverhampton confined her line of visiting within much narrower bounds than Lady Morville, who mixed indiscriminately with all who had rank or fortune to entitle them to admission in the gay circle in which she moved. Lady Wolverhampton seldom frequented public places, except the theatres ; she had, in the first years of her widowhood, lived in seclusion, and but lately returned to these gay scenes on account of her son, and a daughter finishing her education. To Lady Wolverhampton these scenes had lost their

their relish they yet retained for the volatile Lady Morville. Lady Augusta's mind appeared in a state more suited to her present residence than to the house of her brother: Lady Wolverhampton had disobliged the Viscountess; for being her only relation in town, where age warranted the liberty, she gently hinted her disapprobation of the line of conduct Lady Morville had chosen, as detrimental to her health, and no way favourable to her character.—Lady Morville assured her aunt her health was never better; and as for her reputation, she would never do aught she was ashamed of, and therefore defied the world and its malice.

The Countess rose and took her leave, grieving for the consequences the tenets Lady Morville held might produce. Lady Wolverhampton wanted power to restrain the career her giddy relation had entered upon; but she had not an opportunity again afforded her, had she been inclined to give counsel so little attended to. The

Earl of Wolverhampton was a constant attendant upon his fair cousin and Alicia; but the close and almost unremitted assiduity of the accomplished and elegant Earl of Trewarne, kept him at a distance from the latter.

The Dowager Countess therefore seldom met her nephew or his Lady; and though unwilling to part with Lady Augusta, yet hoping she might, by her prudence, restrain the volatility of Lady Morville, she agreed to her going with them, upon their return to Harley-street, which was the day preceding the apartments being finished. At length the long-expected time arrived; the workmen departed, and the company began to drive up ere her Ladyship had herself viewed the beautifully ornamented rooms, which, when first spoke of, had caused her so much uneasiness. A concert was succeeded by a masqued ball, and Lady Morville's triumph was complete. The happy effect of the light and simply elegant



gant decorations, enchanted and astonished the brilliant crowd that filled her apartments; the praises she heard from all parties of her taste, filled her Ladyship with a new species of vanity; yet these praises were due to Alicia which were engrossed by Lady Morville; for Alicia it was whose guiding judgment directed what she had planned, and whose economical disposal of her time allowed her to inspect generally every day the alterations as they proceeded, and thus to judge of the whole; yet she envied not the high-sounding encomiums she heard so liberally bestowed, but felt secretly grieved at a fresh source of expence she saw opened for her thoughtless friends.

Our heroine overheard Lord Morville giving, to a circle of critical admirers, a direction to whom the praise of invention was due for the erection of this fairy palace; but Alicia found an opportunity to earnestly desire he would desist, to which he agreed without enquiring her reasons.

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CHAPTER XII.  

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FROM this evening Lady Morville was considered as the very arbitratress of taste and elegance; nought could please, either in dress, furniture, or decorations, which had not received the approbation of the beautiful and elegant Viscountess.

It was now some time since letters had been received from either Sir Robert, her Ladyship, or Mr. Bertram; the last spoke of their safe arrival at Nîmes, from whence they meant to go to Montpellier, but were then

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undetermined

undetermined upon a fixed residence. Sir Robert appearing inclined, from his letters, to cross over to Italy by sea, Lady B. seemed to prefer staying at Montpelier, if its air agreed with her son, who rather wished not to be stationary;—all agreed, however, in this, Mr. Bertram was evidently improved in his strength and looks. This account had given much pleasure to Alicia; but she now began to dread a reverse of tidings. This fear she had the joy of finding unfounded, by a letter she received from Lady Bertram, which proved, by allusions she made to a former, that at least one had miscarried. Henry, her Ladyship said, had recovered his accustomed health, but spoke not of his spirits, nor mentioned Sir Robert, further than by saying he was well when the last account had reached them; and Alicia judged from this the Baronet had, pursuant to his wish, gone into Italy, whilst Henry remained in Languedoc with Lady Bertram.

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I shall not pretend to follow the volatile Lady Morville through the gay search she was engaged in after happiness ; for so busily was her Ladyship engaged by keeping her ascendancy in the hemisphere of taste and fashion, so completely was she occupied, that to attempt to record with any exactness the movements of the gay Viscountess and, of course, Alicia would be a most arduous undertaking ; suffice it to say, every moment was engaged between the night of Lady Morville's new rooms being opened for company, and the time when, as it was then just become the fashion to do, she resolved to give a play ; in which she meant to take a principal part, assisted by some gay friends as the other performers. Lord Morville, who saw the whole world in love with his wife, and charmed by the brilliancy of her taste, thought not of refusing this new whim ; and at Acorn-bank was a temporary theatre erected—the size of the house not allowing it to be within doors, and also accommodate the numerous expected guests.

The

The arrangement and fancy of the decorations of the theatre were the produce of Alicia's taste, which before had acquired such unbounded applause: she and Lady Augusta both excused themselves, under plea of incapacity, from taking parts in the dramatical treat Lady Morville purposed giving.

Lord Morville had, previous to his quitting Berkshire the preceding year, proposed himself a candidate for a town of some importance, to represent it in Parliament; but in this attempt he did not succeed. Soon after the Earl of Trewarne became upon an intimate footing with Lord Morville, and understood the defeat he had sustained; the Earl offered, with the generosity and delicacy which appeared to distinguish him, a seat in the House of Commons to his friend, for a then vacant borough, which was perfectly at his disposal—begging at the same time no mention might be made of the terms on which the seat was procured; the Earl of  
Ashford



Ashford being the ostensible giver of it to Lord Morville, whose short acquaintance with the Earl of Trewarne authorised not his doing this, against the various former applications made for his interest.

Lord Morville had no sooner taken his seat, than, in order to cut a figure as well as her Ladyship, he had become a violent disclaimer against the measures of government; for this, therefore, as the principal reason, was the theatrical exhibition of Lady Morville at Acorn-bank fixed for Easter holidays, when the house was not sitting.—Lady Augusta and Alicia received the company, and did the honours of the house; Lady Morville performing the first night the heroine of a modern sentimental comedy. After the performance, an elegant supper was served to her Ladyship's theatrical friends and audience; beds were provided for the majority, and the remainder returned to town.

Lady

Lady Augusta and Alicia on this occasion occupied the same chamber; to which, about six o'clock, they retired, mutually fatigued. The sun had already rose; and as it fell upon the surrounding objects, a thousand tender, but painful, ideas were awaked in the mind of Alicia. The giddy levity of Lady Morville, who could, during her parents' absence with her amiable brother (who might, for aught she knew, be sinking under increased illness), heedless of their sufferings, lead such revellings beneath the roof where she had been educated with far different maxims—"Oh! no," she at length exclaimed, as she threw her arms round Lady Augusta, who had been employed in a train of similar reflection—"Oh! Lady Augusta, to what will this lead! I cannot longer be silent on a subject equally, I am assured, distressing to you as myself; I tremble for my friend—I fear for Lord Morville."

"I see it, I feel it, Alicia; ruin will ensue, if a speedy stop is not put to the mad career this thoughtless couple are now equally engaged

engaged in; both have numberless good qualities, but both are alike vain and giddy. Alas! Alicia, my dear friend, we are unequal to the task which seems to be assigned us;—would to heaven my father and the Baronet were returned! they might, doubtless, insist upon a different line of conduct;—our remonstrances would not avail.”

“What pain will Sir Robert and Lady Bertram feel at learning, whilst they are watching, anxiously watching, over the life of one child, the other was divested of sensibility so far as in their house to expose herself to the gaze of critical assurance, on the boards of a theatre, though that theatre is stiled a private one;—so expensive a proof of her vanity also, she has given!—it was, indeed, a painful exertion I have been making, Lady Augusta; for, spite of my efforts, I could not forget the impropriety I thought a beloved and, till lately, amiable friend was committing. You know I had, ere it was fixed, joined you in objecting to the plan, though (as, alas! I foresaw) ineffectually.”

“The

“The Earl of Trewarne, I find, is, Alicia, entirely of your opinion and mine upon this subject, by the hints he gave me regarding Lady Morville; and I dare say, many more of the guests at Acorn-bank will censure with less delicacy than his Lordship.”

“Ill indeed, my dear Lady Augusta, will the present instance of insensibility of heart agree with his Lordship’s sentiments; for his soul is, alas! too deeply susceptible for his peace.”

“Did not there exist too great a disparity in years, I should more than suspect, my dear Alicia, that the Earl was a favoured lover.”

“No, Lady Augusta, no, he never professed, never told me he loved me;—the charm I feel in his society would for ever be destroyed was he to do so. I think I feel in conversing with him a pleasure to which few others I now enjoy can be compared; but it is a melancholy and exquisitely refined sensation;—it is not that I feel happy  
by

by listening to Lord Trewarne, as he talks to me of a lamented wife, of the loss of his children death bereft him of; yet so powerful are the appeals which his language, his voice, his accent, and countenance make to my heart, that every avenue to it is unlocked as I pity and sympathize."

"You talk, Alicia, of the Earl in so romantic a way, that, did I not believe you incapable of disguise, I should still think he had spoke of his love for you, and that you had not listened to these sentiments without feeling a reciprocal passion."

"I deny not, my dear friend, that I have listened to Lord Trewarne as he spoke of that passion, but not as now feeling it;—no, Lady Augusta, they were the youthful feelings of the Earl, in which, whilst he spoke, I felt most deeply interested, as I have done, when he talks of his present estrangement from happiness; and sure, in listening to a man, whose every word, every look and action breathes the virtue, the beneficence of his soul, I do not act wrong."

"You



“You look grave, Alicia; I meant not, believe me, to censure;—I agree with you in thinking the Earl possesses uncommon powers of pleasing, with a clear and cultivated understanding, and a heart that appears the seat of virtue; so rational are his sentiments, so insinuating his address, that if you listen, no wonder you forget that it is not fit he alone should engross you.”

Sleep soon after this put a period to their conversation. Alicia, however, slept not long—rising when scarce a single housemaid was up. Lady Augusta was still asleep; and the morning being a very fine one, in the last week of April, she stole quietly out of the house, and taking the path that led to the observatory, seated herself on one of the garden chairs before it, where oft, in more peaceful times than she now witnessed, had our heroine spent many a cheerful hour with the then truly happy Mary Bertram; many an hour thus seated had she listened to the fascinating conversation of Henry, whilst,

whilst, unheeded, the sun had sunk below the horizon. Alicia gave way to the feelings that overpowered her soul with a kind of tender regret, and not unpleasing sense of sorrow which these fond recollections occasioned; and, with her face covered by her dress, she leaned over the arm of the chair for some time; then rising softly, exclaimed, "Ah! happy days! dear is your memory to the heart of her who again cannot taste of happiness, cannot again know peace!"—Opening the door of the observatory, Alicia had advanced some steps across the lower apartment, before she perceived the Earl of Trewarne, who had at her entrance been employed in examining the orrery which stood in this room. Alicia felt mortified; his Lordship had doubtless been a witness to her recent agitation.

"You are," said the Earl, bowing, "an early riser, I find, Miss Sleigh."

"I like not to give way to a blameable indolence; and at all times, my Lord, I  
accustom

accustom myself to a modern portion of sleep; to exceed it is no indulgence to me."

"But yesterday you had much to exhaust and fatigue; you do not certainly think three hours sufficient to recruit your waste of spirits?"

"My spirits are good; nor have I, my Lord, that unhappy delicacy of constitution which cannot bear a little fatigue."

They next discoursed of the building, of the use to which it was assigned, and of the various mathematical and astronomical instruments it contained.—His Lordship could not refrain from expressing his surprise at the quickness of his fair companion's penetration, at the depth of her understanding, and her knowledge in sciences, of which women are in general little acquainted with but by name.

"I am indeed," said his Lordship, "now fully convinced that you do not like to give way to indolence, nor ever can have done so ;

so; it would have been unpardonable had you not, with such talents, aimed at acquiring knowledge; but you, Miss Sleigh, must, upon philosophical subjects, have had also an able master.

The subject was a very painful one to Alicia, nor could she repress the sigh which closed the sentence, as she named Mr. Bertram as her instructor.—The Earl endeavoured to draw Alicia into a further conversation regarding Mr. Bertram, but she avoided it. His Lordship then spoke of Lord and Lady Morville, expressing his fears, in very friendly terms, for the consequence of their conduct, and said Lord Morville's estates already had suffered.

“ You surely, my Lord, have been misinformed; consider how short a period has elapsed since they have lived in a stile in the least likely to impair their property. Lord Morville's estates, and her Ladyship's fortune, is well known to be sufficient to authorise an elegant establishment.”

Lady

Lady Morville's fortune is safe, Miss Sleigh; I know Sir Robert did not advance it, as he proposed, previous to the Scotch expedition. You appear as if offended; heaven knows I meant it not! To Lady Morville's gay parties, you, Miss Sleigh, have been my only inducement; of this you cannot but be conscious. For your peace, for their's, have I said to you what I did, in hopes your prudence might some how avail in stopping the ruin which undoubtedly every day increases and accelerates. Do not, therefore, think I meant an officious and ill-timed interference where I felt uninterested for the welfare of the parties; to Lady Augusta I also have given hints, which either she did not, or would not understand."

Alicia felt most powerfully alarmed, and conjured the Earl to fully inform her of what had come to his knowledge regarding the embarrassment of which he spoke.



“To this embarrassment I have, Miss Sleigh, most unfortunately, largely contributed.”

“You! my Lord,” said the astonished Alicia, “how have you contributed?”

“You know, I believe, Miss Sleigh, that it was by my interest his Lordship got his seat in the house;—intent upon making a figure, he was most desirous of getting into Parliament; with some of the members of the party he thought fit to espouse, he has closely connected himself, and, to a certain honourable friend, lost in one night nine thousand pounds. Had this cured Lord Morville of the unfortunate propensity he has of late been seized with, that loss would be a trifle; but, night after night, he has associated with a set of people, who, whatever rank is granted them in society, are, in fact, chiefly supported by plundering young men of fortune at the gaming-table, who, like Lord Morville, are so unfortunate as to become connected with them. By this means he has lost very considerable sums;

fums; though I do not precisely know the exact amount, yet I can assure you the estate in Berkshire has now only a nominal owner in Lord Morville."

Alicia was thunderstruck at this intelligence. She had entertained no fears of his Lordship having attached himself to a set of gamblers, as, previous to his coming to London in January, she knew he had always professed a complete dislike to all kinds of gambling, racing excepted; but still more was she shocked, as she listened to the Earl's account of Lady Morville, who, he informed her, also played deep;—she had been drawn in by a set of female gamblers, whose station in life was such, that their houses were the resort of the first ranks, their company was courted, and they were visited by people of the highest fashion. Those ladies were pointed out to Alicia by his Lordship. At one of their houses, a few nights preceding, Lady Morville had lost upwards of two thousand pounds: the evening was well

recollected by our heroine, for she never had seen her Ladyship's temper so much ruffled as it was when they returned home. Grieved, mortified, and distressed, Alicia inquired of the Earl what he judged was proper for her to do in this desperate situation of her friend's affairs.

“ I think it necessary that at least Lady Bertram should be acquainted ; her presence, doubtless, would check her giddy daughter. When a woman plays as Lady Morville does, she exposes herself to what her Ladyship may not be aware of till too late ; when the finger of calumny is once pointed, it is not the season for honourable retreat.”

Alicia shuddered at the picture.

“ To speak to Lord or Lady Morville would not, Miss Sleigh, answer the end proposed. I gently hinted to his Lordship my opinion regarding the people I had of late heard he associated amongst, and he flew  
into

into a passion, that, had I not, upon another account, resolved to bear, must have made an entire breach between us. He, however, soon forgot I had offended; for, previous to coming here, his Lordship had 4000*l.* of me, which, I dare venture to affirm, will be transferred to other owners before the conclusion of the week."

Some of the gentlemen, Lord Morville's guests, who had risen, were seen fauntering towards the observatory, and Alicia with the Earl returned to the house.

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CHAPTER XIII.  

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THE party, after amusing themselves in different ways, all met at dinner, and the evening closed with a ball. A part of the company, amongst whom our heroine was concerned to see Lord Morville, preferred cards. Alicia standing up in a cotillion with the Earl of Wolverhampton, Lord Trewarne, who was sitting by her at the time, whispered to her his intention of going into the card-room, to prevent, if possible, Lord Morville's playing desperately; when Alicia, who never found much inclination for dancing,



cing, again sat down. She felt anxious and uneasy for the return of Lord Trewarne, who she thought suspected either Lord Morville of desperation, or some person of a design upon him. It was with much painful exertion that she had been enabled to support herself, and conceal her feelings; but now her alarm had risen to a height that rendered her restless and absent; and whilst the Earl of Wolverhampton was pouring into her ears a declaration of his love, she was thinking of all the long train of misery which seemed ready to overwhelm her careless friend, who, with a heart as light as the feathers in her head, was tripping it away to the full band that, at a most enormous expence, had been engaged for the week. Lady Augusta, complaining of fatigue, seated herself by Alicia, and inquired if she was well, for her looks had made her suppose she was not. Alicia complained she had sprained her ankle, and that the music had given her the head-ache; but these Lady Augusta saw were but pretences to avoid declaring the cause of the agita-

tion she had perceived. Lady Morville now advancing, rallied the whole party; and Lady Augusta and the Earl of Wolverhampton were obliged to join the dancers.

Amongst the guests at Acorn-bank was a German nobleman, who had been about two months in England, bringing, upon his arrival, letters of introduction to several people of distinction. By all he had been more or less noticed; yet no one to whom these letters were addressed, had been more attentive to Baron Kaphausen than the Earl of Trewarne, who had seen him at Vienna; he remembered him at the house of the friend whose letter he had been the bearer of; and he introduced the Baron, not long after his arrival, to Lord Morville, with whom he soon became intimate. The Baron sung a good song, had a smattering of almost every language in Europe, through which he had been an universal traveller;

ler; had a story or anecdote to relate at all suitable times; was as supple and insinuating as we English were accustomed to represent the French before the late revolution; and was all things to all men—that is, as far as his abilities reached; for our heroine, who saw through the artful flattery which he bestowed upon her, gave him little credit for any virtue of heart, or depth of understanding; but she saw him possessed of a most consummate assurance, and imagined his countenance wore an air of deep-laid artifice and deceit.—Alicia had spoken to the Earl of Trewarne in the morning in French, in decided terms of Baron Kaphausen.—“Yes,” said the Earl, “all this I now plainly see, and feel deeply the error I committed in trusting to the very slight knowledge I had of the Baron at Vienna, and to the recommendation of the acquaintances I formed in Germany; for I behold with regret Lord Morville’s mistaken partiality to a man who I think is coolly taking advantage of him.

I have endeavoured, though in vain, to open his Lordship's eyes to the Baron's true character, to his attachment to play, and the use he appears well inclined to make of his knowledge in that art ; but he would not listen to me on the subject."—The Earl concluded by assuring Alicia, that at least, while under the roof of Lord Morville, he would watch the man whom he had unfortunately introduced to his notice. Such were the sentiments entertained by the Earl of Trewarne of the Baron Kaphausen, who was one of the party engaged at play with Lord Morville.

Alicia, finding the Earl did not return as soon as she expected, was no longer able to contain her impatience, and quitted the ball-room. In the anti-room she met the Earl, who informed her Lord Morville was betting with so much warmth and want of judgment, as laid him open to the designs of his adversaries ; that he had alternately lost and won. "When I quitted the room," said the

the Earl, "Lord Morville had just won 1500 guineas, and I think he may be about half that sum gainer; but a large bet is again depending."

"For heavens sake! return—you yet, my Lord, may prevent the ruin so eagerly courted."

The Earl obeyed, and the agitated Alicia returned to the dancers. Again she was besieged by Lord Wolverhampton—again she was scarce sensible of his presence.

Supper was at length announced; but it was not till after repeated messages that Lord Morville appeared. With grief, though not with surprise, Alicia marked the abstracted and agitated air which sat on his features, and saw him swallow bumper after bumper, whilst he sent from the table, untouched, the delicacies with which he repeatedly filled his plate. Lord Trewarne's looks spoke that concern which he could no otherwise impart to our heroine without



exciting observation; nor was it in her power to obtain any information from his Lordship, the company not separating to their chambers till after he had left the supper-room. Lady Augusta complained of fatigue, and Alicia resolved not to communicate to her the unpleasant account the Earl of Trewarne had given, at least till morning, as it would only be adding to her Ladyship's fears, without lessening her own.

Alicia slept little, and rose, after being a short time in bed; with a design of going out to walk; but recollecting her meeting the Earl the preceding morning, she resolved to wait Lady Augusta's rising, and not to go alone. She therefore went to the library, and took a book, with which she meant to return to her chamber; but her feet, as it were, involuntarily turned to a small room which adjoined the library, and was Mr. Bertram's study

study when at Acorn-bank. Here Alicia had not sit long, when she heard voices from the library, which did not attract her attention till the foreign accent of Baron Kaphausen struck on her ear, and immediately she distinguished the other was that of the Earl of Trewarne, who upbraided the Baron for his conduct in regard to Lord Morville, whose guest he was, and reproached him with meanness in winning his Lordship's money at a time he knew he was off his guard. Kaphausen warmly defended himself, by swearing no unfair means were used; that it was Fortune which had favoured him, and he would have been a fool to turn his back upon her because she had jilted Lord Morville. The Earl also accused the Baron of designs against Lady Morville's honour, which the other very coolly denied, saying, whatever he might once have wished, he then was perfectly easy what sentiments her Ladyship entertained of him; it is her friend, my Lord, the charming Miss Sleigh, whose

whose love I wish to obtain, and I cannot say I have any reason to despair."

The Earl now could no longer command himself, but flew into a rage when he heard Kaphausen make the last insinuation.—  
"Miss Seigh," said his Lordship, "entertains exactly the opinion of you that you merit; never will she, I am well assured, listen to the Baron Kaphausen after he has ruined the husband of her friend; and dare you, ungrateful and abandoned as I believe you are to every vice—I say, dare you look up with hope to the divine Alicia?"

The Baron laughed. "And you, my Lord, then, I suppose, dare look up to this divinity?"

"I have more respect for my own character, Baron Kaphausen," said the Earl, with a sarcastic tone of voice, "than to suppose that you and I should enjoy the same privileges."

"I shall," replied the Baron, in the same tone, "suppose my right to Miss Sleigh is equal  
equal

equal to your Lordship's till she gives some proof of her preference, and then I do not feel disposed to yield her; for depend upon this, my Lord, you shall not prevent her being mine upon some terms, which at present she may, if she chuses, make matrimony."

"Wretch!" exclaimed the irritated Earl, "is it for you to profane the name of her who is dearer to Trewarne than all the world beside? can he then tamely hear thee talk of her thus?—no, by heaven, and all that is sacred, I swear thy blood shall atone for the insult thou hast dared to imagine to her who is infinitely more prized by me than the blood which mantles round my heart."

"Few women," exclaimed the Baron, with a cool kind of insolence, "are worth endangering one's life for; but on this occasion I am at your Lordship's service."

At this juncture some gentlemen came into the library, and Alicia heard the Earl go out. Distracted almost by what she had

had recently learnt, Alicia scarcely knew how to act; she was almost assured of Lord Morville's ruin, and she dreaded a fatal meeting between the Baron and the Earl, whom she saw slowly and alone enter a walk that led to the river which flowed through the grounds; and without thinking of the declaration of his sentiments she had listened to, so as to prevent her, Alicia took another path, which communicated with that the Earl had entered. When they met at the turning of the walk, his Lordship started, for he had been sunk in revery. Fixing his peculiarly fine eyes upon her, he inquired of Alicia if she had met with any thing that morning to agitate her, or if it was merely the traces of what she had sustained the preceding evening, which he marked upon her countenance.

“Both, my Lord; I am indeed much grieved. Alas! do, I conjure you, inform me how Lord Morville's and the Baron's losses and gains now stand?”

“I.



“ I perceive, my dear Miss Sleigh,” said the Earl, “ that you are prepared for the tidings I have to impart ; for I saw that you marked last night the desperation of Lord Morville’s countenance, at which time he had lost (chiefly to the Baron) four thousand pounds. You observed, I dare say, Madam, with grief equal to mine, that Lord Morville was deeply intoxicated before we quitted the supper room, which I did earlier than the rest of the party ; for I felt my spirits completely harassed, and then had no dread of what was about to happen. Poor Morville, desperate from his losses, and almost distracted by the wine he had swallowed, privately challenged Kaphausen to try again their fortune by dice ; and when all the company were retired to their apartments, the instruments of his Lordship’s ruin were produced. I arose early, with an intention of walking to the observatory ; in passing the room where we had supped, the door of which was ajar, I was shocked to hear Lord Morville’s voice, in an elevated and sharp tone,

tone, wishing himself at eternal perdition; then swear, 'once for all, there it goes.' I rushed in, but the fatal dice had rolled on the table, and Morville, pale, breathless, and almost suffocated, had sunk in his chair. 'Good God! what means this!' I cried.—'Means!' said his Lordship, starting up with a wildness of manner, 'it means ruin, beggary, damnation! I have thrown away my own happiness; I have ruined the woman whom I should have protected—in her father's house too have I done this! but I will not live to hear his reproaches.'—Throwing up the dash, Lord Morville leaped out, and ran with all his speed down one of the walks opposite the house. I followed, with Kaphausen behind me; but the speed of Morville far exceeded our's; yet we were so near as to behold him mount the parapet of the bridge, and from thence dash himself headlong into the river, which there, you know, flows deep. My speed was redoubled at the sight; I leaped into the water, and caught him, but was obliged to  
relinquish

relinquish my hold. The Baron now, however, reached me; and when Lord Morville again rose, with his assistance he was fortunately dragged to shore."

"Thank God!" said Alicia, who was breathless with terror, "thank God he is spared; yet may his virtues predominate, yet may Lord Morville be a blessing to all around him!"

Alicia wept plentifully, nor could the sympathising Earl refrain from tears as he beheld her's, by whose request he resumed his tale.

"His Lordship," said the Earl, "was soon so far recovered as to be able to walk into the house, and to the servants a plausible tale was told regarding their master's appearance, as well as our's, who now became more composed. I learned what had been the cause of the desperation he had committed, which was indeed total ruin:—the first and second throw with the fatal dice  
had

had more than repaid Morville's losses, but each succeeding one was against him; yet, urged by the distraction of his mind, he continued till all was gone."

"All!" said Alicia, looking aghast,—  
"sure, my Lord, you meant not that in its full extent—sure Lord Morville risked not his estates?"

"Would to heaven, my dear Miss Sleigh, I could reply as I could wish! would to heaven I could say the imprudent young man had left himself a house to shelter himself or Lady Morville!"

"Alas! my Lord, does my friend then know of this?"

"She does not, nor will, I hope, till matters are somehow settled."

"Oh! with such a cool, deliberate villain as Kaphausen, I doubt there are little hopes even of a compromise; say then, my Lord, how is it? you tell me of affairs being settled before Lady Morville is acquainted with what has happened?"

"I

“I have, my dear friend, already so far interfered as to justify what I have said. I have taken measures to satisfy the Baron for the present, so that the world may remain ignorant of what has happened; and when all is settled, I shall have from Lord Morville bonds for what I advance, payable when he is Earl of Knaresborough, at least such is the plan that I have in a hasty way proposed. In early life I was well acquainted with the Earl of Knaresborough and Sir Robert Bertram, though years have elapsed since we have met, from my long residence in foreign countries, and my afterwards seclusion; with both, I flatter myself, I may prove a successful mediator.”

From Alicia's first introduction to the Earl of Trewarne, she had considered his character in a most amiable light; but now he appeared to her as something above the common race of mortals; except Henry Bertram, no one, she thought, would have acted so nobly;—he had stepped forward  
like



like the guardian angel of Lord Morville, and had snatched him from death and despair; he it was, whose generosity would shield her dear, her beloved Lady Morville (for so yet, notwithstanding her follies, she was) from misery; it was the Earl, whose exalted friendship would save the hearts of Sir Robert and Lady Bertram from many a bitter pang. Alicia attempted to articulate her feelings; but, too powerful, they mocked at the weakness of expression, and the words died ere they reached the ears of the Earl, who beheld them more eloquently depicted on her finely expressive countenance.

“It is,” said his Lordship, “a selfish pleasure when I confer happiness; and to merit your approbation, what yet I have done, or mean to do, is a comparative trifle.”

“I am indeed sensible of your Lordship’s friendship,” said Alicia, sighing; “at present it is almost the only satisfaction I enjoy; you must not then deprive me of it, nor must you, my Lord, risk a life, spent in acts

of benevolence, against the sword of such a villain as Kaphausen."

"Alicia," said the Earl, "what is it you mean?"

"You cannot, my Lord, have forgot the challenge which passed so lately in the library; nor can you, humane and nobly generous, approve of a practice which, it is true, custom authorises, and which honour proudly commands."

"Excuse me, Miss Sleigh, on this subject I dare not argue against the dictates of conscience; nor dare I, holding the rank in society I do, absolutely reject what a regard to my honour demands; but of this, rest assured Lord Morville's affairs shall be entirely settled ere I will venture my life against Kaphausen's; and many things may intervene which will utterly prevent any meeting of that nature. Pardon me now for inquiring how you, my dear Miss Sleigh, came by your knowledge, as, unless the Baron has informed you, it appears unaccountable; it is not yet half an hour since I took him  
into

into the library to talk upon matters that, I believe, were never mentioned, as he spoke of what put me off my guard so far as to produce the challenge to which you allude:—sure, then, the infamous Kaphausen dared not disclose this to you?”

“No, my Lord, I was in the room adjoining the library, and by that means came into possession of what passed.”

“Then you are also, Alicia, in possession of a secret I have hitherto carefully guarded from you, and have learned that on you depends my future happiness or misery. Already you know in early life I loved—fondly loved; you know the sad deprivation of happiness I sustained. I forsook for a time my native country, my friends; my heart I had supposed was incapable of again loving: I saw you, Alicia, and felt I was mistaken, for the passion you inspired was violent as my first;—for you I again mixed in the gay circles in which you moved. Afraid to trust to the dictates of my heart, I scrutinized, I listened; but, from each inquiry,  
you

you rose with added lustre, superior to all who surrounded. I yielded then, without opposition, to the love inspired by an object amiable as lovely, and fancied happiness again was in my reach. Then it was, Alicia, I learned you were beloved by a youth, worthy even of you;—despairing I chafed, or rather tried to chase, the delusive hope I had conceived; but I soon understood that, however strange I thought it, Mr. Bertram's attachment was a hopeless one. I then wrote to Mr. Meynel and Sir Robert Bertram for permission to address you. As yet, even from Mr. Meynel, I have not heard; but should I obtain from him and the Baronet what I have asked, will you then, my beloved Alicia, listen to me on a subject so connected with every future plan of happiness? To the idea of your rejection such despair is annexed, that I now execrate the accident which has caused me to make a declaration of my feelings."

Alicia summoned that fortitude and presence of mind which the sad tidings the Earl imparted had nearly overthrown. Her present feelings, the deep sense of his generosity to her friends, all rendered her unfit to judge how she should answer the declaration she had listened to; and she dreaded being betrayed into making some promise to which her heart would not assent when the impulse which urged it had subsided. Rising, therefore, with as collected an air as she could assume, she replied, "I am, my Lord, sensible of the honour I have obtained in thus being distinguished by you; ever will I recal the idea of your partiality with pride. Insensible must I have been to superior merit, superior attainments, had I not, ere now, derived pleasure from the friendship with which you have honoured me; and now, my Lord, how can I determine to reject when I have been listening on a subject which has so deeply interested me in your favour, and given me ideas the most exalted of your character? I cannot now  
4 judge



judge of my heart, when your generous conduct to my friends has unlocked every avenue; it is, my Lord, an unfair advantage you have taken;—speak not to me again on the subject, till you receive answers from those who have a right to direct me; then I may be less under the influence of circumstance, and more a free agent.”

“ Oh! tell me not, Alicia, I have taken an advantage of your generous nature, wound me not thus cruelly; you must be, you are satisfied I meant not now this declaration of my feelings, which has been wrung from me by accident. You know also the Baron entertains a passion for you; allow me to warn you of its consequences, for Kaphausen’s soul is incapable of a worthy love; he seeks but his own gratification; he is insensible of the excellence of the object which has inspired the passion he feels, and he will stop at nothing to accomplish his ends. I tremble for your safety. Alas! dared I endeavour to prevail upon you to be Lady Trewarne, you would be safe from his at-

tempts ; then I should have it in my power to chastise his insolence."

"I thank you, my Lord, but Alicia can defend herself against the arts or insolences of such villains as Kaphausen."

"I will not urge you, I will not owe to a generous impulse of your heart, that which yet I hope love itself may grant ; allow me but to retain your friendship, and bestow on me, Alicia, your confidence."

"That, my Lord," said Alicia, extending a hand the Earl respectfully raised to his lips, "that friendship is cemented for ever, I trust, between us ; but speak not to me of love."

The Earl for the present obeyed, for he spoke of Lord Morville—describing to Alicia, from the bridge on which they now stood, how his Lordship's life had been endangered, how saved. The conversation then turned on Lady Morville, whom Alicia judged it was necessary should be acquainted with the derangement of her Lord's affairs ; but the Earl said it was under the idea of concealing his  
2 folly

folly from his Lady that Lord Morville had been brought to accept the terms made with the Baron.

“To Lady Augusta sure, then,” said Alicia, “there can be no impropriety in revealing the truth.”

“By no means,” said the Earl; “Lord Morville has sworn, should his folly and ruin become known to his relations, he would instantly end a life he could not endure.”

They were joined by Lady Augusta and the Earl of Wolverhampton. Lord Trewarne affected to be gay, and Alicia concealed her feelings.

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CHAPTER XIV.

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THE company at Acorn-bank, during the morning, divided into separate parties, some strolling about the grounds. Lady Morville, with several of her guests, rode out on horseback, whilst her Lord, under pretence of indisposition, remained in his chamber. Alicia had seated herself in Lady Bertram's dressing-room, as most likely to avoid intrusion, that she might have leisure to reflect on the strange events of the morning ; when, without any ceremony, the door opened, and Baron Kaphausen entered to tell her what she

she already was informed of--that he loved, and wished to marry her;—to force her to which, he spoke of Lord Morville's ruin, and her own state of dependance.

Alicia's pride and resentment were equally roused; and, in cool and determined language, she gave, in such terms of sarcastic contempt, a refusal, as would have stung to madness almost any one but the phlegmatic Baron, who appeared not in the least moved, and inquired if she had well considered the importance of the offer she had rejected; that he was now going to quit Acorn-bank, but would see her again in London, and supposed by that time she would think differently; and bidding her good morning, left the apartment.

Soon after Alicia was joined by Lord Morville. "I have," said he, in a horrid tone of voice, "met Kaphausen, who tells me he means to marry you, and has insolently asked my consent."



“The Baron has, my Lord, this instant quitted me ; I was obliged to listen to propofals that, you may be certain, I pofitively refufed ; I deemed them, my Lord, alike infulting to you and myfelf after his late infamous conduct towards you.”

“Ah ! Alicia, did he then dare to inform you what has paffed ?”

“In part he did, my Lord ; but from the Earl of Trewarne I had the fad recital.”

“Has then the Earl betrayed me ? Does Lady Morville, does Augufta know my folly, my wretchednefs, my ruin ?”

“No, my Lord ; though the Earl related the particulars, it was chance firft revealed to me the events of laft night ; the Earl bound me to fecrecy.”

“Oh ! Alicia, vainly did the noble Trewarne ftrive to prevent my ruin, vainly did he caution and point out to me the fiends who lurked to devour me ; but for this generous friend, the heart of my beloved Mary muft have been rent with anguifh ; but for him, Alicia, I fhould have rufhed, unbidden, into the prefence of an offended Deity.”

Lord

Lord Morville was pacing the apartment with quick and unequal steps, but now made a full stop; and as he fixed his eyes on Alicia, said, "The Earl too loves you, Miss Sleigh; to me it has been known some time. I made him sensible of poor Henry's prior claims to your heart, and he concealed from you his attachment till he heard Sir Robert's sentiments regarding the liberal offers he has made respecting settlements, and also whether Mr. Bertram still, as before, despaired of an union with you. I know, Alicia, I have forfeited all claim to your esteem; my opinion therefore can have no weight, or I would say, if still Henry is rejected, where will you find a person worthy of you, if not the Earl of Trewarne?"

Ere Alicia could reply, a servant informed Lord Morville that the Earl waited him in the library—a summons which his Lordship obeyed, after he had made Alicia promise not to impart her knowledge of his misconduct to his Lady or sister. "Allow,"

said he, "a change in my future conduct to precede the information."

On the countenance of Lord Morville, whose general expression was an air of disengaged frankness and gaiety, was depicted deep humiliation, but mixed with a kind of wild despairing grief, which flashed over it by fits.

"Oh! would I was not thus restrained!" thought Alicia; "would that I could pour out to the kind consoling Lady Augusta the various sorrows that swell at my heart, and whirl my brain in a chaos of reflections, dark, gloomy, and distressing, where no one ray of comfort breaking in shews in perspective happier days, and bids me hope."

The declaration the Earl had made to her in the morning now presented itself; and with all the composure the present state of her mind would allow, Alicia reviewed her heart, from which she had endeavoured  
to

drive the idea of Henry Bertram. Next to him, she found Lord Trewarne enthroned there;—she had admired his elegance of manners, his various and pleasing talents:—these had sunk, with insinuating force, on a heart which never lightly yielded its esteem; but that was his Lordship's: his virtues had enforced it; and the recent proof she had received of the noble generosity of his soul, of his attachment to herself, had placed him in her estimation far beyond any one she knew, save the favoured Henry. But she felt not for the Earl that romantic, that wholly engrossing sentiment, which was alone in the power of Henry to excite;—there, and there alone, he reigned unrivalled; for the Earl was admired, esteemed, and at present almost worshipped by Alicia, but it was Henry Bertram she loved, spite of her exertions to the contrary, and he it was, he who alone possessed the undivided power over her affections; and if he wished, if he desired she should marry Lord Trewarne, from the idea of which her whole soul now revolted,

she would endeavour to conquer her repugnancy, and consider him as her future husband ;—yes, for Henry would she sacrifice all her present feelings, so that she might contribute to his happiness. Alicia, quitting the dressing-room, was passing along the gallery, in hopes of finding Lady Augusta returned from her little excursion, when she met the Earl of Wolverhampton, who, with a very serious air, entreated Miss Sleigh would favour him with a few minutes' conversation, as he wished to speak with her on a subject that deeply interested him. Alicia, whose thoughts instantly presented her with the idea of the Baron and Lord Morville, led the way to the apartment she had just quitted ; when, to her utter surprize, which, had she attended to the eyes or gallant speeches of his Lordship, she might have expected, Alicia received from the Earl of Wolverhampton the third declaration of love she had that morning listened to.

“ My



“My Lord,” said Alicia, “reflect upon the imprudence of which you are guilty;—I am doubtless honoured by the attachment you have declared, and shall ever remember it with gratitude, but must decline offers unfashioned by your noble relations, who would never receive into their family a portionless orphan.

The Earl said no one had a right to object to his own election, and that Lady Wolverhampton had expressed her approbation of his judgment in selecting a woman whose amiability promised to ensure his happiness.

Alicia expressed her obligations for her Ladyship’s good opinion, but added that her inclinations at present did not coincide with his Lordship’s wishes, as her heart declared not in his favour, or that of any one.

His Lordship then expressed his hopes that time might make, with his assiduities,  
an

an alteration in his favour, as at present she felt no predilection for any more fortunate rival.

Lady Augusta entered, and the Earl almost immediately quitted the room. "Has my cousin," inquired her Ladyship, "at length, my sweet girl, ventured to declare to you his passion? and have you refused him, for so, from your countenances, do I infer?"

"You are right, Lady Augusta; but why did you so readily make the inference?"

"Because, Alicia, I have long been his Lordship's confidante; from me he never concealed the passion you had excited; but I encouraged not a declaration of his sentiments to you, whose heart I knew, although I was not your confidante, Alicia, was in possession of Henry Bertram—nor could I suppose he was already forgotten by you, or that my good cousin had any chance of proving a successful rival to Mr. Bertram.

But,

But, my dear friend, allow me to be the Earl's advocate with you ; some hidden circumstance prevents an union with Henry, and, alas ! I too well know our hearts will not obey at command the dictates of reason, nor is it in our power to transfer our affections ; yet, Alicia, if this is possible, would it not contribute alike to the future happiness of you and Mr. Bertram ? His conduct regarding Mr. Carleil plainly proved it was his opinion, that were you married, he should regain his peace ;—it is necessary, Alicia, for your own sake also, you should have a home independent of the Baronet or his family, who, while you remain single, are banished from their's."

" Ah ! my dear Lady Augusta, call not thus into action ideas so painful. I must not love Henry Bertram ; time may effect what now I vainly strive to accomplish ;—but tell me not of marrying—alas ! my heart revolts against the idea. The Earl of Wolverhampton deserves a richer, a fairer bride than the poor Alicia, who will not  
impose

impose on him by bidding him hope time may so far change her sentiments, as to enable her to say she prefers him to all his sex; and till then I shall never consent to give my hand at the altar to an amiable young man, who well merits that happiness which it is not in my power to confer."

"Yet, Alicia, reflect ere you finally refuse the Earl, who is endowed with so many truly amiable and pleasing qualifications, which, in the circle of domestic life, bids fair for insuring happiness;—loving you, Alicia, almost to idolatry, if united to him, ere long your gentle heart would do him justice."

"I know the Earl to be amiable, handsome, accomplished; but, Lady Augusta, why thus urge——"

"Because, Alicia, I wish his happiness; but yet think not I wish it independent of your's, for so it could not exist; and because, Alicia, I cannot bear you should prefer the Earl of Trewarne to Francis, merely for wanting a kind of plausibility of manner  
which

which makes the Earl credited for what, if he does possess, he cannot in a more eminent degree than my cousin, of whose unaffected goodness of heart I could relate a thousand instances ;—and I am actually, Alicia, at this moment not inclined to think the Earl all perfect ; for though, perhaps, at present he is nearly what he wishes you to believe, yet there appears a somewhat at times in his countenance which implies he has not always been so ; it is a look which carries a degree of libertinism—have you never observed this, Alicia ?”

Our heroine defended the Earl of Trewarne in warm terms ;—never in her presence had his countenance worn an expression so foreign to what she judged his real character.

“ Excuse me, Alicia ; perhaps,” said her Ladyship, “ in pleading the cause of Lord Wolverhampton, whose real worth I know, I may have gone beyond proper limits, as I spoke of him I deem his rival.”

“ As



“As yet, Lady Augusta, you know not all the merit the Earl of Trewarne possesses. Oh! did you know his candour, his generosity, his noble sentiments, his upright, his liberal soul, you then would with me think all eulogium falls short in speaking of them.”

Any further conversation was put an end to by Lady Morville's sending to request Lady Augusta and Miss Sleight would come to her instantly. The summons was complied with, and they found her Ladyship in the greatest spirits, busied about giving directions for some alterations in the dress which that night she was to appear in as the heroine of a deep tragedy. To consult upon this highly important affair had she sent to Lady Augusta and Alicia, who could not forbear deeply sighing as she recalled to mind the distress which, however lightened by the generous friendship of the noble Earl, must yet fall heavy on her gay friend. Having settled the important affair of the dress, Lady  
Augusta

Augusta and Alicia left her Ladyship to attend the play.

The elegant little theatre at Acorn-bank was filled with a circle of the first connoisseurs of the drama the fashionable world could produce, who were divided in their opinions regarding the charming Lady Morville. The dispute was, whether she seemed more at home in the former performance, when she appeared as a modern fine lady, a part she performed every day, or in that she now personated, in all the wild and deep distress of a lofty tragic Queen?

Alicia felt not interested in this debate, which was agitated between every act. The Earl of Wolverhampton was seated by her, but spoke little, and appeared dejected. The countenance of Lord Morville wore a look of rather more composure than in the morning. The generous Earl of Trewarne appeared solicitous to dissipate his Lordship's chagrin; and the Earl, dividing his time  
between

between him and our heroine, seemed to live but as he could infuse happiness into her bosom; yet she felt it not. Anxiously passed the time; and it was a degree of comparative comfort Alicia felt when the company separated, and she retired to her chamber, where she found her mind too busily occupied to sleep. The strange occurrences of the day completely and fully engrossed her; the folly and imprudence of Lord and Lady Morville also filled her with a painful sense of future foreboding; and she had received that day offers of marriage from two noblemen, both of whom she highly esteemed, yet had she refused both. The visit to Acorn-bank seemed to team with fatality. Now Alicia recalled what Lady Augusta had urged respecting the Earl of Wolverhampton. Alas! too certainly she it was who banished Henry Bertram, and with him her kind benefactors; was it probable then she should reject without consulting those benefactors? Had she a right to do this? Had not Henry,  
when

when Mr. Carleil offered her his hand, wished her to accept him? To contribute to his happiness, willingly would she make the sacrifice of her own; yet she knew not how far she had it in her power to decide her fate. Oakdale was still unvisited by her, and Henry might not have fully explored the secret; but, alas! again she thought that way little hope remained to cheer, for too certain was this one fact proved—Oh! too sure she was the sister of Henry! Again the incongruities of the story rose to her mind, and again, as oft before, was she lost in a labyrinth of wild and fearful conjecture.

Thus did Alicia pass the night, restless and anxious, and rose with her mind and body equally unrefreshed, but felt happy that this day the gay party at Acorn-bank would disperse. By noon none remained but the rival Earls; and the Earl of Wolverhampton, after having had another interview with Alicia, also set out with an intention

tion of going instantly to France, to consult with his friend Henry on a subject so near both their hearts ; and if he favoured the love he felt for Alicia, then to beg Sir Robert's permission to address her, although she still assured him that his friendship, though highly prized by her, could never be returned by the love he professed to feel. To Sir Robert and Lady Bertram he took letters, as also from Lady Augusta to the Earl her father, whom Lord Wolverhampton purposed to see in his road, as the Earl was at Versailles attending the French Court upon some important business, but of what nature Alicia knew not. Another day was spent at Acorn-bank, the Earl of Trewarne still remaining as Lord Morville's guest ; and never did the Earl appear to more advantage in the eyes of our heroine, as she saw him kindly endeavour to support Lord Morville's drooping spirits, and in parrying the ill-timed raillery of his Lady.

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The morning of the second day after the Earl of Wolverhampton quitted Acornbank, the remainder of the party returned to London. Alicia was drove by the Earl of Trewarne, which favour he solicited, and she did not refuse. The conversation soon turned to what occupied Alicia's mind—the situation of Lord Morville's affairs, on which subject she had not had an opportunity to speak to the Earl for the two preceding days. His Lordship informed his fair companion that Lord Morville had wished his Lady would not see the party which were invited for the following week; but this the Earl had opposed.

“His Lordship was, I think, right,” said Alicia, “it surely would be more prudent.”

“But then, Miss Sleigh, reflect on the consequences that would follow so public a declaration of all not going right, not to say any thing of Lady Morville, who must in that case be informed of what has taken place; for I understand the tradesmen's bills  
are

are pretty considerable, and I do not dispute, were these people to learn, as doubtless they would, of the company being forbid his Lordship's levee, there would be rather an unpleasant association of bills and bailiffs the following day ;—such a thing happening would throw all into an additional confusion ; and I do not fear but the Baronet will settle those accounts for his Lordship, but which, in that state of affairs, unless I or some friend at hand did, would prove a most unpleasant piece of business.”

The Earl then informed Alicia that the Berkshire estate, which was but a small one, was all that the imprudent Lord Morville had left, and even that was deeply mortgaged, as she before knew ; but the Earl, who had raised the money upon it, declared he would return the title deeds upon his arrival in town. The Malton estate Kaphausen had given his Lordship a written promise should be his for a certain sum infinitely below its value, “ by which,”  
said

said this generous friend, " My dear Miss Sleigh, you will understand my hopes for concealing from the world the knowledge of Lord Morville's folly are well founded, as all the securities resting in my hands will enable me to do as I wish; and when Sir Robert advances her Ladyship's fortune, a part may be cleared, should the Baronet not think the Berkshire estate an adequate settlement."

The generous, noble, yet delicate manner in which the Earl had arranged the affairs, with his way of communicating what he had done to Alicia, made her ready almost to believe he was of a superior order of beings; and she expressed only in part her sense of his conduct. Almost was she afraid to trust herself to speak on a subject in which she was so deeply interested, lest the Earl might make inferences from the warmth of her expressions, which would too highly flatter hopes she wished, for his sake, might be extinguished; yet wished, in place of the

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passion from which these apparently disinterested actions sprung, a friendship might arise, pure, yet strong, as her own.

In answer to these acknowledgments of our heroine's, he said his long retirement from the gay world had taught him to think differently from it. "To me," said his Lordship, "no happiness exists but in active benevolence;—I have, Miss Sleigh, felt misery and keen anguish, the recollection of which is yet at times insupportable;—to chase sorrow from my friends has been for years my only enjoyment; my fortune, from my retired life, has accumulated to an immense degree, although my charities have not been very circumscribed. Ah! Alicia, if it is in the power of Trewarne to shield one pang from that gentle heart, his whole fortune to himself were a comparative trifle; deem not then the exertion made for friends so dear to that heart an obligation, or to be viewed in any light but as a pleasure done to himself."

Alicia

Alicia sighed, but spoke not.

“Fear not,” said the Earl, “I am about to speak on a subject which, whilst it engrosses my every faculty, shall obey the injunction you have laid, and shall not be intruded.”

“Alas! my Lord, I accuse myself of ingratitude, of an obstinate blindness to my own happiness; but my affections wait not on my will; they oppose my reason, my judgment. Whatever way I look, I suppose I am doomed to suffer; but you, my Lord, I shall never consent to involve in the misery which I imagine must be my lot, by giving a cold, lifeless consent to be your’s. Again have I examined my heart; it esteems, it almost worships your virtues, but it does not love, nor ever will feel that sentiment.”

“Oh! tell me not this, Alicia—dash not from me the cup of hope—drive me not to despair. Alas! you know not to what you will reduce the unhappy Trewarne;—misery, wild destruction, and moody melancholy  
M 2 already,



already, Alicia, have been mine ! I shudder as I recal what I have sustained, and dread a renewal of feelings too severe for reason ; then tell me not thus, my Alicia ; suffer me to hope till I have answers from Sir Robert and Mr. Meynel."

" Ah ! would to heaven, my Lord, my heart would accord with my friend's wishes ! but ill must an union with me contribute to your happiness ; ill could you brook the want of that ardour of attachment in the woman you selected from the world, and dignified with your name."

The Earl, as if fearful to dwell on a subject that appeared so deeply to agitate him, was silent, till he had collected fortitude to change the topic for one in which both were less interested.

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CHAPTER XV.

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WHEN arrived in town, the Earl alighted at Lord Morville's, where he staid to dine : her Ladyship dressed in the evening for a rout at Lady Mountsorrell's, Lady Augusta and Alicia accompanying. They had not been many minutes in the room, when Baron Kaphausen advanced, and paid his compliments to the party ; he soon attached himself to our heroine, and laughed and chatted with the same insulting effrontery as before his visit at Acorn-bank. In vain did Alicia repel his impertinent assiduity by the marked contempt of her manner ; it was with some difficulty she could restrain

the Earl of Trewarne's indignation from breaking out as he beheld the infamous Kaphausen pester Alicia with addressees so odious to her heart and her ears.

Lord Morville had pleaded to his Lady engagements elsewhere ; but was shut up at home, busied in examining papers preparatory to the settlement of his affairs which was to take place.

Early in the following week, his Lordship's steward arrived from Malton, and Alicia had the happiness to learn, before the conclusion of it, that Lord Morville's affairs were, by the generosity of his friend the Earl of Trewarne, put into a train of settlement. Kaphausen's debts were paid, a certain sum being fixed as the price of the Malton estate; and the London house, which, with the small estate already mortgaged to the Earl in Berkshire, was the whole of Lord Morville's fortune. The Berkshire estate was released from any particular

ticular obligation, and the bonds were preparing, which were to tie Lord Morville to the repayment of the sums advanced by the Earl upon the death of the Earl of Knafborough. To this Lord Morville had objected, proposing, by a retrenchment of expence, and by a partial disclosure of the derangement of his affairs to his father, to repay his generous friend by instalments. The contest had been very warm on this subject, and the Earl at length insisted upon doing his own way, or abandoning the whole management.

Whilst these matters were arranging, no difference was made in the household of his Lordship, or in her Ladyship's way of spending her time or money; the season advancing now near at hand for quitting London, and at Malton his Lordship meant to commence his plan of retrenchment.

Letters now reached the family of Lord Morville from Sir Robert, Lady Bertram,

and Henry, dated Paris, where they then were, having come from Languedoc to give the Earl of Knaflborough a meeting : these letters spoke of the improved health and spirits of Henry. Alicia received a letter also nearly about the same time from Mr. Meynel, in which no notice was taken of Lord Trewarne's application for his interest with our heroine, but spoke of an alarming fit of sickness which he had just recovered from, and informed Alicia he was ordered to Bath, but was not yet determined whether he should go there, or try a further change of air, but meant to quit Elmwood the following day. This gave sincere concern to the feeling heart of Alicia, which entertained the most unbounded respect for Mr. Meynel. A few weeks preceding this, the Duke of Wakefield had been confined with complaints that, yielding not to medicine, made his friends fear for his life ; and he was ordered, as the last resource, to take a sea voyage. Lisbon or Naples were the places fixed upon for his Grace's temporary residence ;



dence; the Duchefs, with the Marquis and Marchionefs of Felton, were to accompany the Duke in this fearch after health. So haftily was the determination made, and fo quickly put in execution, that Alicia had not an opportunity of faying adieu to her charming friend the Marchionefs, who, however, wrote both to her and Lady Augusta ere ſhe fet out, although ſhe had no leiſure to ſee them.

Two days after the departure of the Duke of Wakefield and his family, was the evening on which Lady Morville gave a ball to a ſplendid crowd of rank and faſhion;—on this occaſion, during her Ladyſhip's ſtay at Acorn-bank, the elegant ſuite of rooms, ſo lately fitted up, had been almoſt entirely decorated anew. Again was Lady Morville's fine taſte extolled, whiſt painfully Alicia felt at the profuſive waſte and expence at a ſeaſon when economy was ſo neceſſary.

The Baron had the assurance to take advantage of the invitation he had received some weeks before, and was one of the first who appeared in the rooms ; and attaching himself to Alicia as at Lady Mountsorrel's, persecuted her with a haughty detail rather of the honour he did her by the offer of his hand, than any attempt he seemed to make towards gaining her affections. At length our heroine was relieved by the appearance of the Earl of Trewarne, who, no longer, as before, restrained by the hold the insolent German had upon Lord Morville, soon made him retreat, which he did, muttering curses at the interference of the Earl.

“ Ah ! would to heaven, Alicia,” said his Lordship, “ I had a legal right to protect you ! I dread every thing from the infamous Kaphausen ; situated as I am, my power to chastise his insolence is limited and restrained.”

“ Think not, my Lord, I feel in the least intimidated by the haughty manner in which  
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the Baron urges his odious suit; and believe me, I feel a sufficient confidence in myself to protect me either from his arts or his insolence; but say, my Lord, what is it you dread for me? say what should I dread in a country whose laws protect the weak against the strong?"

"It is, Alicia, from the bold, undaunted, yet cool and determined insolence of the Baron's conduct towards you that I feel alarmed for your safety;—his character is unmasked, nothing will check his pursuit, and I dread for you an evil the most terrible; whilst he remains in England you are not safe from his machinations."

"I assure you, my Lord, I dread them not," said Alicia, smiling at the fears the Earl entertained for her.

Nothing particular occurred during the remainder of the evening. Lord Trewarne continuing to attend our heroine, the insolent Kaphausen did not approach.

The following morning Lady Augusta and Alicia went a short day's journey with the Countess of Wolverhampton, who was going into Shropshire. The Earl, her son, had set out the preceding day for the Continent, having been detained till then upon important business; but, in the mean time, had not seen Alicia, or even his cousin Lady Augusta. When our heroine returned from this excursion, she found a letter from Lady Bertram, dated, as the last, Paris; but wrote in a stile more satisfactory than that, which Alicia thought was cold, distant, and reserved. This gave a pleasing account of Mr. Bertram's health, and expressed hopes that the recovery of his friend, which was at length effected, would largely contribute to restore his usual vivacity. The letter referred Alicia to Lady Augusta, who had received from the Earl a full account regarding the enlargement of the unfortunate William March. Surprised, amazed, and almost overjoyed, scarce could Alicia believe what she read—William March restored to his friends!

friends! was it possible? was he then still worthy of Henry's friendship? Yet it appeared strange, very strange, Lady Bertram had not communicated to her before her hopes on this subject. Again Alicia glanced over the letter, and her suspicions were roused, that others had been carelessly lost, or villanously intercepted. She now sought Lady Augusta, whom she found in her own chamber employed in reading letters, which, on Alicia's approach, were thrown on the floor, and she was folded to the heart of Lady Augusta, who exclaimed, in an accent of hysterical joy, "Oh! Alicia, he is restored, he is found! William March is as amiable as when you knew him: Oh! Alicia, how severe have been his sufferings, whilst we all believed him abandoned to vice, sunk in ingratitude."

Overpowered by her feelings, the voice of Lady Augusta was lost, and it was some time ere she was sufficiently composed to give to our heroine the following account, which she was so anxious to receive.



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CHAPTER XVI.  

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“IT was,” said Lady Augusta, “when I had more leisure hours than of late I have had minutes, that I was with my father spending a social evening with the Marquis and Marchioness of Felton, when the Earl mentioned the strange claim made upon the Malieveren estate. The story was unknown to the Marchioness, and in a great measure to the Marquis, he having been with the Duke and Duchess of Wakefield in Ireland, where his Grace has, you know, large possessions, at the time that those claims were  
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the topic of the day ; the Earl therefore briefly recounted the material circumstances of the affair, in which was interwoven the history of poor William. ‘ Where was the convent situated from whence this nun was taken ? ’ inquired the Marchioness. The Earl informed her, and also who the lady was with whom he had eloped. You can scarce have an idea of my agitation, of my joy, (which, however, was instantly damped, by the idea of the evil that had now no doubt overtaken this amiable young man) as I listened to the charming Marchioness. Already do you know, Alicia, of her having been decoyed abroad by the Duke, whilst a story was spread of her marriage with a foreigner, and her death ; she had first been placed at Dieppe, but removed from thence to the convent of Benedictines at Cambray, a few months previous to Mr. March visiting it. Mademoiselle Durand had engaged her heart, without the approbation of her parent, to a young gentleman of small fortune, which accelerated with her father for her taking  
the

the veil as soon as her noviciate would allow. In the chamber of the supposed Lady Malieveren, William March saw Mademoiselle Durand, who felt highly interested in her fate. Monsieur Villefort had received a considerable addition to his fortune, and petitioned the Count de Mavigny to grant him his consent to marry his daughter—but her doom was fixed; the following week she was to take the veil, and make vows that must sever them for ever. Despairing of moving the Count, Monsieur Villefort set out for Cambray, and strolled round these walls that contained the fair object of his wishes. In one of those perambulations he met with the ill-fated William, who, deeply concerned for the blooming sacrifice, spoke of the lovely Mademoiselle Durand, who was the following day to be professed; her lover told him of his passion, of his despair, and his new friend readily undertook to convey a letter through the channel of Lady Malieveren. On the evening of the very day in which the Mademoiselle's fine  
hair

hair had been cut off, and she had exchanged the gay garb of fashion for the coarse habit of the daughter of St. Benedict, and bound herself, by vows the most sacred, to abjure the world, Lady Malieveren put into her hand the letter of her lover; by the same means was an interview contrived, in which the fair nun yielded to the impulses of her heart, and the sophistry of March, who taught her to believe vows did not bind when the mind gave no assent. She then agreed to elope with him from the convent: Lady Malieveren abetted, and artfully pleaded the lover's cause. Mademoiselle Durand had softened the rigour of Miss Ross's fate by her friendship, and now resolved she should partake in her emancipation. This was disclosed to her lover, and Mr. March agreed to take charge of the friend of Mademoiselle Durand during the time of elopement, and Lady Malieveren promised she should accompany her to England. The night of the elopement being the one preceding the day she was to set

set out, safely had the fair nun and Miss Ross, by Lady Malieveren's contrivance, gained the outside of the convent, where Monsieur Villefort and Mr. March waited to receive them; but had not gone many paces, when they were stopped, and poor William arrested in the King's name; and when his friend offered to interfere, he was told, unless he wished to experience the same fate, to keep silence, which, on every account, circumstanced as he was, he knew was needful. To leave Miss Ross amongst strangers, Mademoiselle Durand could not bear; and however inconvenient it was, resolved she should accompany them in their flight. Crossing from Cambray through a part of France, they entered Switzerland, and wandered from one town to another, till at Geneva the Marchioness met with a Scottish family, whom she accompanied to Scotland. Plainly, from this recital, was proved the diabolical intentions of the enemies of William, who by their various arts had accused him of a crime of which he was innocent, and



and ruined him in the good opinion of his friends, at a time when he was doubtless suffering imprisonment under a false pretext; as it was not for carrying off the daughter of Count Mavigny, for there again his name suffered, whilst, under a fictitious one, he underwent a different species of persecution. The Earl judged he was a victim to the suspicious tyranny of the French Government, and resolved to set out for the Court of Versailles, where he had once resided a considerable time in a public capacity, and doubted not of procuring his release, upon representing the affair properly, either by the British Ambassador, or by his own personal interest. The Marquis, Marchioness, and myself alone knew what was the business which so hastily carried the Earl abroad; to you, Alicia, I would have revealed the hope I entertained, but you were ignorant of the attachment between Mr. March and myself, which began before Lord Morville went upon his travels. At that period, you will remember, Mr. Bertram and his friend accompanied

compained my brother in the visit he made at the Countess of Wolverhampton's, nor was it till I judged William unworthy of my regard that I became acquainted with you; then blame me not, my sweet girl, for reserve on this subject, for still I resolved, should he be ultimately found less deserving than I had known him, to hide from you, from every one, the love I still felt in my heart. The Earl, Alicia, knew of this, knew also the struggles I had made to surmount a passion so ill-founded as it appeared; and kindly solicitous for my happiness, assured me, on his quitting England, was my choice found worthy of me in other respects, he would wave what was by the world judged the most essential points, rank and fortune, and allow me to attend to the election my heart had made. From my father's letters I found little reason to flatter myself those pleasing hopes would ever be realized; at length it was discovered, after various disappointments, that a gentleman of Picardy, who had resided a considerable time in England,

land, and had lately returned to his native province, and who was strongly suspected of disaffection, had been seized at Cambray, and sent to the Bastile; after much application, the Earl was allowed to see, though not to speak to this person, whom he instantly knew to be the unfortunate Mr. March. He appeared thoughtful and emaciated from confinement. Sir Robert Bertram was already in Paris; and soon after this discovery, her Ladyship and Henry joined him. The Earl's interest was used in the favour of this unhappy prisoner; yet it was some time ere the Minister could be convinced, as the gentlemen who was supposed to have been arrested, could no where be heard of; and a number of treasonable papers were found sewed in the lining of the coat worn by the person apprehended, as also a portrait which he had, was found to contain cyphers, the particulars of a plot of a most dangerous tendency. This portrait was given, I understand, to William

by his pretended mother, by whose arts also, I doubt not, those papers were sewed in his coat. Sir Robert, Lady, and Mr. Bertram's testimony, with that of Mr. Blackmore, (who went over with the Earl) were for some time insufficient to gain credit; but now, Alicia, these letters assure me of his liberty, and that he is once more with friends, whose esteem is increased as they think of his sufferings."

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CHAPTER XVII.  

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WITH joy did Alicia receive the news of William's safety, of his innocence, whilst she shuddered at the miseries he had endured, and at the complicated art, villany, and power of his unknown and mysterious enemies. Now Alicia learned the cause which had oft filled her breast with inquietude, for Henry had been the confidante of Lady Augusta, and thus was accounted for the secret conferences they had held. The portrait too which Lady Morville had seen was that of William, though she supposed it  
it



it was her brother's ;—it was the same which Alicia overheard her friend mention, and give to Henry with such caution at Maliveren on the New-year's day, for the purpose that he should have it set.

Thus were these circumstances explained by Lady Augusta. The letter of William to her Ladyship spoke of his wasted strength, and that his friends had wished him to remain a few months abroad in a warmer climate, but hoped he might be suffered to return with the Earl, if it was even necessary he should again cross the sea. Of Henry he spoke as being much changed, and labouring under a fixed dejection ;—the letter also contained the hopes and fears of the amiable William March on the subject nearest his heart ; and Lady Augusta, though he was ill, yet felt happy he was again restored to liberty, and was the same virtuous, manly, and interesting character that had gained her early love. Her father had also approved the choice she had made, and she looked forward to many  
a white-

a white-winged hour spent in the society of her beloved William out of that giddy circle of gaiety in which she now moved.

Soon after the Morville's return from Acorn-bank, the younger of the Miss Dalrymples had taken the measles; and before she was well recovered, her sister sickened with the same disorder: the day preceding that she and Lady Augusta received the letters which contained the joyful intelligence regarding Mr. March, they were fast recovering.

Engagements of various kinds had prevented our heroine for the last six days going to see her young friends—an office that had been daily performed by her own maid. The day before the King's birth-day the letters from Paris were received by Alicia; and the day following it a rout was given by the Countess of Llanderry, who intended to leave town the next morning. For this was our heroine dressing,

when she received from Mrs. Heath, the governess of the school where the Miss Dalrymples were placed, a hasty billet, informing her Miss Harriet Dalrymple was attacked with a violent sore throat and fever, which had come on since the preceding day, when Miss Sleigh had sent, and that the utmost danger was apprehended; and begged, if possible, she would instantly come to Clapham, as Miss Dalrymple was most anxious to see her.

Alicia did not hesitate in complying with this request, which she communicated to Lady Morville and Lady Augusta; both of whom advised her to wait till morning, as it would be quite dusk, if not dark, before she reached Clapham.

Our heroine, whose courage was superior to most of her sex, declared she was no way alarmed, and would not scruple going in a carriage unattended, as she would not return to town till morning. Lady Morville

then spoke of the danger she would incur from infection; but this consideration had no weight with Alicia, set in opposition to what she deemed her duty, and looked upon as an indispensable obligation.

Lady Morville then insisted she should take the chariot, with an additional footman to her own. To this Alicia assented, only changing Lady Morville's servant for her own woman. She was in a few minutes ready to set out; in the entrance-hall she was met by the Earl of Trewarne, who, on seeing her in an undress, with a look of anxiety, almost started. To his Lordship our heroine related the errand she was going upon, saying one of the young ladies (wards of Mr. Meynel) at Clapham was taken dangerously ill.

"I conjure you, my dear Miss Sleigh," said the Earl, with evident earnestness, not to attempt going to-night, at least not slenderly attended. Consider the hour; it is

past nine o'clock; it will be dark ere you reach Clapham."

Alicia again declared she had no fear, and that Mr. Meynel would not have acted so towards them; and she was determined to do all in her power to supply his place to the sweet girls, who had no one friend near them.

"But, my dear Miss Sleigh," said the Earl, with a serious tone, are you not aware of the opportunity this may afford the Baron? Are you sensible of the dangers you may have to encounter?"

Alicia smiled at the Earl's (as she thought) groundless fears. "What, my Lord, do you take this nobleman for a highwayman? you do the order to which he belongs (though an unworthy member) infinite discredit.

The Earl shook his head, and said, "I have lately entertained strange suspicions  
regarding



regarding the Baron, which, though they amount not to certainty, yet are more than sufficient to alarm me where I feel so deeply interested; but of this, I doubt not—Kaphausen is a deep, scheming, desperate villain—an abandoned libertine, whose head and heart are equally capable of conceiving and of executing the most diabolical plans. He is now in possession of a large sum in money and bills, that will enable him to do much if he wishes to carry his schemes into effect;—allow me then, my dear Miss Sleigh, to be your escort to Clapham.”

This Alicia, however, peremptorily refused. “Why, my Lord, you would make me suppose we lived in the days of chivalry and romance, and that I was a beauteous damsel, whom some recreant Knight was about to carry off in despite of my inclinations. Well, my Lord, should this terrible Kaphausen carry me to some enchanted castle, I trust to you for my release, so adieu.”

The Earl led our heroine to the chariot, and, with a serious air, bade her good night, whilst, with her maid, and attended by the faithful James, she set out for Mrs. Heath's. Yet, as she drove along Westminster-Bridge, and saw the shades of evening now closing thick over the prospect, what the Earl had so recently said rose to her mind, and she wished Clapham had been nearer town. She ordered the coachman to quicken his pace; but he, to her infinite concern, informed her that, although he had not perceived it when he left Harley-street, one of the horses had fallen extremely lame, but thought he would be able to proceed if she wished it. Already so far on her journey, Alicia was determined not to return, and Ann had ridiculed to her mistress the fears of the Earl at so early an hour. Such indeed were the sentiments of our heroine; yet Lord Trewarne's opinion had great weight, and he had perhaps other reasons than these he mentoined; and she ordered the man to proceed, which he did so slowly, that some time ere they reached  
Clapham

Clapham Common, it was dark;—the night was thick, and a kind of drizzling rain fell. After driving a few yards across the common, the lame horse, stumbling, got entangled in the harness in such a way he was raised with difficulty, and then, unable to stand, again fell. The coachman and James both declared he would die. Alicia scarcely knew what to resolve upon; to wait there was almost impossible at that hour, for it was, she judged, almost eleven o'clock;—to get out and walk to West Clapham where Mrs. Heath lived, the ground slippery with rain, dark, and a considerable length of way, seemed equally impracticable, as she must, even though guarded by James, perhaps meet with insult, besides the danger of taking cold. In this dilemma a hackney-chaise came up, with the driver of which James agreed to take his mistress to Mrs. Heath's; and Alicia getting into it with Ann, and James mounting behind, again proceeded: but scarce were they out of sight of Lord Morville's carriage, when three fellows

rushed from the ditch, and seizing the horses, dragged the postillion and James off their horses, tying their hands behind their backs; which being done, one of the fellows mounted, and drove at a most furious rate, whilst one got inside of the chaise to prevent any attempt of escape. A carriage with four horses now was found waiting at the corner of a lane, into which our heroine, with Ann, was put;—resistance would have been vain; the fellows took care to inform them they carried fire arms, in order to silence the shrieks of Ann. One man again got into this chaise, which had wooden blinds, and the doors were fastened by locks. Alicia found they drove with the utmost rapidity, and that in a short time they were again in London: she then called aloud for help; but either her voice was not heard, or it was disregarded. Their strange companion in the meantime preserved a profound silence, till the shrill outcries of Ann brought forth a volley of curses. Alicia now was convinced the Earl's fears for her safety were  
but

but too justly founded; for the Baron it doubtless was who now had made this bold attempt, which yet she did not fear to frustrate. They went through a number of streets, and again were upon a turnpike-road, still driving for about an hour at the same violent rate, when they stopped a few minutes, and the horses were changed, and again they proceeded at their former pace. About sun-rise the silent guard unlocked one of the wooden blinds, and let it down: the country was new to our heroine; yet she conjectured, from the situation of the sun, and the length of their journey, they were some distance from town, though in rough, broken, and unfrequented roads, which obliged their speed to slacken; the slow rolling of a cart was heard at a little distance, and the ill-looking companion of our heroine closed the blind. They soon after stopped to change horses, and had got upon a better road, still proceeding with the same velocity, which lasted not long; for the carriage seemed to turn again into byelanes,



lanes, when they stopped at a ruined cottage, where a fire had been kindled, and water heated for breakfast. Here were Alicia and her maid suffered to get out for this refreshment;—two fellows (equally villainous in appearance with the inside guard) acted as postillions; both wore pisto's in their belts. After breakfast Ann refused going into the chaise, for she was sure and certain, she said, they would murder them; but her mistress ordered her to go quietly, saying, “It will not be long, Ann, till we are overtaken, and these people and their employer must alike answer before a court of justice for this violence.”—The fellows gave a kind of malicious and satirical grin, but spoke not. Again were they and one of the fellows (who hitherto had acted as postillion) for guard seated in the carriage, which drove with as much speed as before; sometimes the blinds were down, but then the roads were through bye-lanes or across commons;—they, however, passed through some towns, but without stopping; and as

Alicia

Alicia saw the sun sink red in the west, she found they were driving in that direction; but, from the retrograde kind of movements they had made, she could form no idea of what county she might then be in. The blinds were drawn up after sun-set, and they continued to drive for about an hour, when the carriage stopped, and the door was opened exactly opposite to the entrance of a house, into which she was commanded to go. This, however, she refused to do, till one of the postillions dismounted, and offered to force her out of the chaise.

“Go, fellow,” said our heroine, “tell him whose instrument you are, Alicia fears him not; she is, and ever will be, superior to his wretched arts; she will not be forced out, but will enter voluntarily, although conscious the villain is within”.

She now leaped out, and bade the trembling, weeping Ann follow. One of the men conducted them into a room, with

scarce any furniture, except a table which was spread in it for supper, and a chair stood at the head and foot of it. The dishes were instantly placed on the table by their attendants, which being done, the Baron Kaphausen entered, to whom Alicia, after casting a look upon Ann, meant to silence her scream, advanced with an unembarrassed air, and inquired to what end she was thus violently seized and carried from her friends?

“For your own good and my pleasure,” answered the Baron, with his usual nonchalance.

“I ought to have been consulted on that head; as yet I do not think it is for my good, nor will you find any pleasure when called to an account by my friends, or when summoned to appear before a court of justice.”

“The supper cools,” said the phlegmatic Baron; “you have not eat since morning; sit down—we will talk of justice, and drink your friends’ health after.”

On

One of the fellows was about to put Ann out of the room, but her mistress insisted upon her staying where she was, and the Baron acquiesced. Alicia resolved not to abstain from eating what was set before her, and a seat was brought for Ann, whose hunger got the better of those fears of poison which she had declared to her mistress as supper was brought in.

The cloth removed, Alicia again demanded an explanation from the Baron regarding his intentions towards her.

“ Oh! I shall soon inform you. I learned you were about marrying Trewarne, and I resolved to disappoint him for his cursed interference in Morville's affairs. So far my plan has succeeded in taking you from him; and if you will marry me in Scotland, where, after a zig zag kind of journey, we shall go, I will, if you wish it, attend you back to London, to be congratulated by your friends as Baroness Kaphausen.

A ship

A ship lays in Leith Roads bound for Hamburgh, waiting for me and my suite; and if you do not chuse to return to London, then you must go on board this ship as Miss Sleigh, if you prefer that name to my title; and you may rest assured, when we arrive at Hamburgh, equal care shall be taken of you till we reach my castle, which you shall see repaired, and my estate improved, with the money I have had of your wise friend Lord Morville; and, perhaps, when these improvements are finished, I may allow you to return to England, to inform his Lordship how judiciously I have disposed of what he lost, and what a charming life you led as the mistress of a German Baron."

"And so the adventure is to end," said Alicia, with an ironical tone. "I am exceedingly obliged by the great condescension of Baron Kaphausen, but am afraid he has not calculated the chances with the same wonderful exactness he did that evening at Acorn-bank, when the money of Lord Morville was transferred to the Baron; for



for I am apt to believe Miss Sleigh will never embark with the rest of his suite, nor ever will have the honour to behold the castle of Baron Kaphausen."

"Your remark, Miss Sleigh, is by no means a just one; for I did not set out upon this expedition till I had carefully calculated the odds, which are with me fifty to one. Morville and Trewarne, I dare say, will be at the Land's End by this time, following a chaise with one of my people in it, who, I am convinced, will scream as loud as your *fille de chambre* has done."

"With you I will neither attempt to reason or remonstrate," said our heroine; "but know I fear you not; bend to you I never will, nor do I hold it possible to be in your power to make me quit Britain against my consent. You, Baron Kaphausen, as a stranger to its laws, customs, and manners, are not aware of the difficulty that must attend putting into execution your plan. In this point I, though a woman, have the advantage; and I know how far all, who are  
concerned

concerned in this infamous transaction, are amenable for their conduct."

"Here, or hereafter," said the Baron, with his usual slow and unmoved tone of voice——

"Both here and hereafter," said Alicia, rising from her seat—"here in this world, I doubt it not, punishment awaits you; and for the hereafter, may God pardon thee the crimes thou hast committed against his ordinances, and against the laws of civilized society!"

The Baron seemed to feel momentarily awed by the dignified and collected manner of Alicia, and attempted not to speak.

"I want rest," said our heroine; "order some woman to shew me my chamber."

"There is no woman here, Miss Sleigh, but yourself and your maid, whom I have been at the trouble of bringing on purpose to attend you."

Ann

Ann began to scream and cry, but was silenced by her mistress, who inquired of the Baron whether he purposed she should at that hour enter the carriage to proceed.

“ No, not to night ;—an apartment is provided for you and your maid, to which, when you chuse, you may retire.”

Alicia, followed by Ann, and lighted by one of the Baron's people, entered a chamber, whose only furniture was a field bed. The window shutters were nailed to, the door being locked upon the outside ; the bed was by Ann and her mistress pushed against it on the inside. After they saw there was no other entrance to the room, Alicia, aware, if she took no rest, she should be rendered unable to encounter the fatigue or danger to which she might be exposed, threw herself upon the bed, as did Ann, sobbing as if her heart would break at the thoughts of going to Germany. She, however, soon slept ; but Alicia's thoughts  
for

for some time banished that composure of sorrow; yet shortly she enjoyed some repose, from which, when she had awoke a considerable time, she began to suppose they were to continue imprisoned in this dark room all day; but about eleven o'clock they were released by the Baron, and found breakfast on the table in the room where they had supped, which was eat by candle-light.

This repast over, the chaise was drawn up close to the door, in which the Baron, our heroine, and Ann, being seated, they set out driving as before. About sun-set they stopped at a cottage, which, like that where they had breakfasted the first morning, was in a ruinous state: here they supped, or rather dined, and again proceeded. Alicia was now certain they had entered Yorkshire, and hoped she might escape before they quitted a county where she would easily meet with protection from some of the friends of the Bertrams.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

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WHEN our heroine and the Baron quitted the miserable hovel where they had supped, Alicia marked the pistols, which had been taken out of the carriage, and laid on the floor (for this place had no furniture but a portable table, that was brought by the chaise), and appeared to be forgotten. As the Baron led the way out without noticing them, Alicia, lingering, snatched them up, and putting them in her pocket, "Merciful God!" she softly ejaculated, "grant me thy protection—grant me fortitude!"

Alicia



Alicia seated herself in the carriage, and felt, spite of her endeavours to the contrary, her eyes closed by sleep; nor did she awake thoroughly for several hours, and even then she felt a stupor from the effects of the dose which, she was certain, had been given in a glass of wine the preceding evening. Ann had also, she said, slept. Incapable of exertion, Alicia was lifted out of the chaise into a public house of mean appearance by the road side, in which was a simple-looking woman, who scarce seemed to understand how to prepare the breakfast the Baron ordered her to make ready, the materials for which he gave her. Alicia, after drinking coffee, found herself in some degree relieved from the stupefaction she had experienced; but of this she complained not. To attempt to escape here she saw would be useless, but determined, when they drove through the next town, to hold one of the pistols to Kaphausen's breast till he let down the blind; but they seemed to be now in roads little frequented, and she imagined they

they had, by crossing the west side of Yorkshire and Durham, now reached Northumberland, through which, in the same direction, they were about to pass. Although Alicia had anxiously watched for an opportunity to put her plan in execution, they had, during the course of the day, gone through no town; when, towards evening, she heard the Baron speak in German to one of his attendants, who replied in the same language. After which he informed Alicia they would be in Scotland in the space of a few minutes; and if she would consent to become Baroness Kaphausen, he would order the driver to go to the first town where they could be married.

Alicia gave a contemptuous refusal, and the Baron flew into a rage. Alicia supposed she heard a carriage behind them; and the blinds being down, she hoped, by the spirited reply she made, to irritate the Baron, so that he would not hear the rattle of the wheels that were now near at hand.

A fer-

A servant galloped up, whilst Kaphausen was so engrossed by his passion, he did not observe what was passing till the stranger had, with the butt-end of his whip, knocked the postillion off the horse (they having, for the greatest part of the last day, only drove with a single pair of horses). The Baron then sought for his pistols; and finding they were gone, broke out into curses just as the Earl of Trewarne appeared at the side of the carriage, the door of which he broke open; and taking out Alicia in his arms, exclaimed, as he pressed her to his heart, "Thanks to Providence, my beloved Alicia, you are restored!"—She sunk, almost fainting, from the violent perturbation of her spirits, in his Lordship's arms. Meanwhile Kaphausen had leaped out, and began to lay his cane over the shoulders of the servant who rode behind, who, from the fatigue of the journey, had fallen asleep when the Earl drove up. The Baron snatched a pistol from the holsters of his servant, and pointed it at the breast of Lord Trewarne. Self no longer

longer occupied Alicia ;—the life of her preserver in danger, every dormant or sinking power was roused ; and rushing forward, she clasped her arms round the athletic Kaphausen, from whom the Earl now wrenched the pistol ; and no sooner had Alicia quitted her hold, than, all fury, his Lordship exclaimed, “ Take then, villain, thy reward ; ”—and drawing the trigger, would have lodged the contents in the heart of the Baron, had not the pistol missed fire. Pale and trembling, the Earl threw, with all his force, the useless weapon from him ; yet still, as if mad with fury, sought for the pistols left in his own carriage ; but those the servants had taken care to secure. In vain did Alicia exert her voice ; the Earl attended not. Scarce could she credit the evidence of her own senses ; scarce could she suppose it possible it was the Earl of Trewarne, late so rational, so calm, so judicious, and humane, whom now she beheld inspired with a degree of rage which bordered upon madness ; and seeking, with a spirit

spirit of insatiable fury, the life of Kaphausen, who, though a villain, he had no right to exterminate from the world, where, it was true, his crimes were many. Rather Alicia would have supposed the amiable Lord Trewarne would have urged with mild, but firm remonstrances, his return to virtue, than thus send him, with all his crimes unrepented of, to make his appearance at that judgment-seat where art will not avail.

The Earl's servants had, however, secured the Baron, who seemed, by this attempt of the Earl's, to be most completely roused, and began to rail against his Lordship in pretty loud terms. At length the voice of our heroine was heard by the Earl, whose passion instantaneously subsided; and taking her hand, saying he would now be her escort, led her to his carriage, and then went to look after Ann, who, during the conflict with Kaphausen, had hid herself behind the hedge, where one of the servants found her. Placing her by her mistress, Lord Trewarne  
now



now also seated himself in the carriage, which drove off, leaving the Baron and his ruffians, whom the Earl regretted having no legal power to detain. Alicia was deeply concerned to behold her generous preserver yet so agitated: she had heard him hint that the misfortunes of his early life had at times caused a derangement of intellects; she now feared a return of this dreadful malady would be occasioned by the rencontre with Kaphausen; for his manner seemed to her like insanity, so different and were his actions from what she had ever beheld. The countenance of the Earl was pale and distorted; every mild, every gentle virtue that had graced it, was fled. Rage, envy, revenge, and chagrin, with a long list of diabolical passions, had usurped their place; his whole frame trembled; and scarce did he appear to hear our heroine, who was pouring out her acknowledgments to him; and as she saw his Lordship still maintain the same distracted look, resolved, if in her power, to give his ideas

another turn. "I am," said she, "my Lord, shocked to see you thus—shocked to see you, by the concern you have felt upon my account, lose sight of those amiable qualities which distinguish you so highly. Alas! is it the Earl of Trewarne I behold a prey to a passion the most debasing? Is it possible the man, whom I thought rose to a height few dared aspire to, can be subjected to such fits of rage—can he be so totally thrown off his guard?"

The voice of Alicia had again assumed its power; the Earl had listened, and now answered.

"Pardon me," said he, deeply sighing. "Alas! I have many faults, though now scarce any circumstance can ruffle that equanimity of temper which has cost me much to acquire; yet, in early life, ere misfortune had assailed me, my temper was rash to an extreme if irritated; and painfully do I recal the sad state in which sorrow plunged my  
my

my intellectual powers. From this, as I slowly recovered, I found it necessary to watch over myself, and then did I acquire that command over my passions, which has now grown habitual, and years have elapsed since I have been so thrown off my guard; but when I saw the being, who of all others is dearest to my heart, you, my beloved Alicia, in danger, the prey of the infamous Kaphausen, I no longer had the power of controlling myself, and a moment of fury, of madness, succeeded;—but you, who raised the whirl of passion, possess the art of subduing it; for now I am calm; and I reflect with horror how nearly I had taken the life of a fellow-creature, who, wretched as he is, may yet live to repent, and be more fit to die.”

The Earl paused a few seconds, and then said—“ With your approbation, Miss Sleigh, we will go forward to Kelfo, from which we are only a few miles distant; it is the nearest place to where we now are that

affords any tolerable accommodation, and you must have much need of rest after your fatigue and anxiety. In the mean time, I will send one of my servants back to London to acquaint the Morvilles of your safety."

Alicia, thanking his Lordship for the attention he paid to her comfort, acquiesced in the plan he proposed, and then inquired by what means he had thus providentially come to her relief.

The Earl said that her footman did not reach Harley-street till morning, as the driver and he had both been detained prisoners in the chaise till day-break. "Lord Morville sent for me, and I instantly imparted to him my suspicions regarding Kaphausen. Morville agreed with me in my idea of his having carried you off. We, with your own servant James, and attended by others less interested in the pursuit, immediately set out divers ways. His Lordship  
went

went west, James south, and I took the north road; upon which I was so fortunate as to overtake one of the Baron's domestics, from whom I gained the intelligence of his going into Scotland to embark for Germany. I doubted not you were with him. In Northamptonshire, with equal good fortune, I met a person, who gave me an account of a chaise, with wooden blinds, and the servants armed, having crossed the country to the W. N. W. To this direction I adhered, whilst I sent my valet, with one footman, forward to Edinburgh by the post-road. Sometimes I had an account which urged me to proceed; at others, for many miles, I lost all traces of you. Thank heaven, however, I have at length rescued you from the villain!"



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CHAPTER XIX.

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THEY soon reached Kelfo, where Alicia procured some little change of dress, and sat down to supper with her preserver less fatigued, and in better spirits than she could have supposed.

“I have,” said the Earl, “received letters from the Continent, which arrived the very day you quitted London. Mr. Meynel, I find, had waited till he had wrote to the Baronet ere he chose to answer me. This is Sir Robert’s letter,”—giving it to Alicia, whose colour alternately flushed over her face,

face, and again retreated as she read the eulogiums of her merit, and the free consent of the Baronet, could the Earl obtain her's. A copy was also added of Mr. Meynel's letter, which declared Sir Robert's approbation or refusal should be his, and that he meant to consider Miss Sleigh at his death in a way that might demand a handsome settlement, though not so large a one as the Earl had offered; which, with the general amiable character he bore, made it appear to him an undeniable match for their ward. Sir Robert said he looked forward to a renewal of that intercourse of friendship which in early life had given him such pleasure; and hoped, by an union with so amiable a girl as Alicia, his friend would be restored to that happiness which misfortune had long deprived him of.

His Lordship, when our heroine had finished this epistle, presented her with two others, which had come in the same envelope, and whose superscription to herself informed

her, by the writing, they were from Lady Bertram and Henry. Alicia opened the former, in which her Ladyship congratulated her upon the conquest she had made of Lord Trewarne, whose merit was well known to her, as his father was guardian to Sir Robert;—and that the most intimate friendship subsisted between them for a number of years, till the loss the Earl sustained in a beloved wife and child, occasioned for several years an estrangement from all his connections; part of this time was spent in foreign countries, the rest in absolute seclusion, in which Sir Robert at different periods visited him in Cornwall. “The Earl,” said her Ladyship, “is worthy of you, my Alicia. Alas! fate for ever denies you should be united where I wished; and if the happiness of Henry, if mine, if Sir Robert’s is dear to you, refuse not your consent to become Lady Trewarne. Were you married, and married so advantageously, so happily, Henry would regain his tranquillity; at least so I fain would flatter myself.”

This

This was nearly the whole of Lady Bertram's letter. Alicia could not summon resolution to open that of Henry: she turned it over, took it up, and laid it down; whilst a faint, sickly fluttering at her heart almost overpowered her. She broke the seal; scarce could she distinguish the letters. The Earl marked her agitation; and with that delicacy of manner which had endeared him to Alicia, quitted the apartment. Her tears fell on the paper as she traced the well-known characters, as she saw the varied emotions that had agitated the writer.

“For my sake,” said Henry, “you are deprived of the paternal care of Sir Robert and Lady Bertram;—give yourself, Alicia, a protector; I shall endeavour at composure when I know you are for ever lost to me;—when I learn you are happy, I shall be so too. Then I may be enabled to behold you as I ought—then may we meet; and I again return to my native country, from  
which,

which, whilst you remain unmarried, I am banished. If then my memory is yet dear to you, if the peace of my parents are valued by you, hesitate not;—where can you find a man so worthy of you as the generous, the amiable Earl of Trewarne, whose worth I am well acquainted with?—yes, Alicia, this union, I trust, will insure equally your happiness, his Lordship's, and that of Henry."

"Oh Henry!" sighed Alicia—Oh my dear Henry! is this then your wish? Alas! it can never conduce to my happiness; you would regret deeply the advice you gave, should you see the air of constraint I must wear;—no, Henry, to no person interested would this union produce comfort. Lord Trewarne, whose heart is the throne of sensibility, could ill brook such a return as I should make to the love he feels for me. Alas! esteem, gratitude, that mounts almost to adoration of his character, yet have not banished the remembrance of Mr. Bertram—no, I will never marry."

Such



Such was the resolution of our heroine when Lord Trewarne entered; and she resumed the fortitude which appeared to have forsaken her.

“My Lord,” said she, “I have read these letters; they speak of you in terms that well accord with my idea of your character; they urge me to accept an offer so honourable to myself; but my heart still is refractory, still refuses to obey the dictates of my judgment, and the wishes of my friends. Deeply am I sensible of your merit. You, my Lord, deserve, and may command, a far different alliance; a fairer, richer, more accomplished bride than the poor Alicia, who throws, with an improvident hand, the offered happiness from her; yet that Lord Trewarne so far distinguished her, will ever be deemed the highest honour of her life, the best eulogium of her merit; although for ever will her heart remain insensible to her own interest, and capriciously deny the request of a man she so highly esteems,

esteems, and of friends to whom she is bound by every tie of duty and gratitude. Alas! my Lord," she continued, bursting into tears, "equally we should be miserable were we to be united, unless I felt differently, very differently from what I now do."

The Earl seated himself by his lovely charge, and soothed, by the most delicate attention, the perturbation she felt. When he saw she was a little more composed, he gently hinted she would appear more respectable as the Countess of Trewarne, on her return to her friends, than as Miss Sleigh, whom the licentious Kaphausen had violently carried off, and accompanied into Scotland. Alas! my beloved Alicia," said the Earl, "shall the finger of scandal be raised by this villain's arts; shall the whisper of calumny go round at the expence of the exalted woman I adore; no, this I could not bear—no, then the arm of Trewarne should not be idle!"

Alicia told his Lordship her sentiments, as she had before done, regarding the practice

tice to which he alluded, and declared she would rather suffer under an unjust censure than have her honour defended at the risk of any one's life, particularly that of a person's she had so much reason to esteem.

The conversation was now changed by our heroine to her return to London. The Earl then said he wished to have gone round by Edinburgh, where he had some particular business to transact, and had fondly flattered himself that there she would have given him a legal right to protect her; but as she had now declared she was determined against ever honouring him with her hand, he would on no account beg the favour of her going so far out of her road, but in the morning, intended to accompany her direct to London.

Alicia thanked his Lordship, but declined his offer, as she did not fear reaching London in safety with her own maid, and would take one of his servants with her. This, however, he would not agree to; and an early hour being fixed for their setting out for London, they parted for the night.

In

In the morning at breakfast his Lordship again resumed the subject of his love in humble and despairing terms; when our heroine (though I have represented her with as much partiality as was consistent with truth, and have wished my readers to believe she was superior in understanding to most of her sex) proved herself yet a mere woman, and that she partook of the capriciousness of their nature; for, to the infinite joy and evident surprise of Lord Trewarne, she now turned a more favourable ear to his suit; and intimating a desire of seeing Edinburgh, inquired how long his Lordship's affairs would detain him there?

He replied, "A day or two at least."

Alicia then said she had reflected upon the folly of her returning to London so slightly attended, and that she could by no means consent to put his Lordship to the trouble of having to return back to Edinburgh on her account, and would therefore accompany him round that way.

To this his Lordship joyfully assented; and they set out together on their journey.

Long

Long before they reached the end, Alicia consented not to leave Scotland till she had become the Countess of Trewarne; so would she for ever, she hoped, cement her own happiness by forming that of the Earl's, whose attention to her in so many various ways demanded all the return she could make;—thus would she meet with the approbation of her friends, who doubtless would censure the refusal she had given; thus would she be rendered independent of the Bertrams, to whom obligations, situated as she now found herself, would become painful.

Such were the sentiments to which Alicia gave utterance during their journey. What had caused this revolution I am not at present able to inform my readers, who yet may rest assured our heroine had some cause, and that it was not mere levity of character.

Safely they reached Edinburgh, where the Earl wished the marriage to take place. This Alicia agreed to, and the next morning was the time appointed.

She quitted the Earl immediately after supper, and retired to her apartment, where she



she employed some time with Ann in arranging the dress she was to wear the following day, and which had been purchased after they had arrived at Edinburgh. Alicia then, apparently in cheerful spirits, retired to bed, and dismissed Ann, who no sooner was gone than our heroine rose and dressed herself. She heard Lord Trewarne retire to his chamber, which was at the further end of the gallery. The noise in the house ceased; all seemed still. Softly she unlocked the door of her apartment, and went down stairs with all the caution she could use, and throwing open a window, leaped into the street, where she accosted the first watchman she met; who, after some little difficulty that occurred from their different dialects, agreed to be her escort to Drysdale's Hotel, where she had been with Sir Robert Bertram, his son, and daughter, some time before. Here she ordered a chaise, with four horses; in which, in less than an hour after her leaving the house she had drove to with Lord Trewarne, was Alicia seated, and rattling over the stones of Edinburgh.

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.



